THE MAN OF IRON

RICHARD DEHAN

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By

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"The Dop Doctor," "Between Two Thieves," etc.

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TO

MY FRIENDS

AT HOME AND OVERSEAS

PREFACE

For the second time since this book's beginning the rose of July had flamed into splendid bloom. I drew breath, for my task approached its ending, and looked up from the yellowed newspaper-records of a great War waged forty-five years ago.

Perhaps I had grown negligent of modern signs and portents, or the web of Diplomacy had veiled them from all but privileged eyes. . . . Now I saw, looming on the eastern horizon, a cloud in the shape of a man's clenched fist in a gauntleted glove of mail.

For days previously the frames of the open windows that look across the garden seawards, had leaped and rattled in answer to the incessant thud-thudding of big Naval guns at sea. One opal dawn showed the grim shapes of Super-Dreadnoughts, Dreadnoughts, pre-Dreadnoughts, and war-cruisers, strung out in battle-line along the glittering-green band edging the horizon, escorted by a flotilla of destroyers and a school of submarines. Night fell, and sea, land and sky alternately whitened and blotted in the wheeling ray of the searchlights. Electric balls danced and gibbered in Admiralty Code. Gulls cradled on the glassy waters of the Channel must have been roused by outbursts of full-throated British cheering, and the crash of the Fleet bands striking into the National Anthem, as the sealed orders of the Supreme Admiral were signalled from the Flagship commanding the Southern Fleet. No

sound reached us ashore but the hush of the waves, the whisper of the night-wind, and the plaintive ululation of the mousing owls on Muttersmoor. Yet, what we saw that night was the awakening of Great Britain to the knowledge that her greatness is not past and gone.

Since then, the menacing cloud in the east has assumed solidity. The mailed fist has fallen, imprinting Ruin on the soil of a neutral country, demolishing the matchless heirlooms of Art and the priceless treasures of Literature, bringing down in grey fragments the glories of Gothic architecture, everywhere destroying the Temple of God and shattering the House of Life. In its ruthless grasp, the chastity of matrons and the innocence of virgins are immolated, the white hairs of Age are not spared, the transfixed babe is brandished on the bayonet. The galleries and cabinets of noble and burgher, the treasure-houses of a nation, are plundered to satiate its rapacious, monstrous greed.

We have lived to see the War of Nations. We are in it, fighting as our Allies of Belgium, France, and Russia are fighting; for racial name, national existence, social independence, and freedom of bodies and souls. And this being so, I see no cause to blot a line that I have written. For the Germany of 1870 *was not the Germany of* 1915.

The New Spirit of Teutonism had not shown its cloven hoof, or unfolded its bat-wings in those dead days I have tried to vivify. The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 *was waged sternly and mercilessly, but not in defiance of the Rules that govern the Great Game. Treaties were held as something more sacred than scraps of paper. Blood was lavishly poured out, gold relentlessly wrung from the coffers of a State vanquished and impoverished. Things were done—as in the instances of Bazeilles and Châteaudun—that made the world shudder, but not with the sickness of mortal loathing. The plan of the*

tactician, the art of the strategist, were not mingled with the obscene malice of the ape, and the destructive frenzy of the maniac. Kings and nobles made War like noblemen and Kings.

Yet that great Minister whose prodigious labours reared up stone by stone, the German Empire, was, unless biographers have lied, haunted and obsessed in his declining days by remorse of conscience and terrors of the soul. "But for me," *he is reported to have said,* "three great wars would not have been made, nor would 800,000 of my fellow-men have died by violence. Now, for all that I have to answer before Almighty God! . . ." *Could the relentless exponent of the fierce gospel of Blood and Iron have foreseen the imminent, approaching disintegration of his colossal life-work, under the frenzied hands of the modern Attila,—might he have known what Dead Sea fruit of ashes and bitterness his fatal creed, grafted upon the oak of Germany, was doomed to bring forth,—he would have drunk ere death of the crimson lees of the Cup of Judgment;—he would have seen in the inhuman shape of his terrible pupil, the grotesque, distorted image of Himself.*

ERRATUM

Page 611, line 2, *for* " Franzosichen " *read* " Franzosen."

The ensuing story does not pretend to be a volume of reference for the student of European History, or a biographical record of the actual sayings and doings of women noble and ignoble, and men eminent or infamous; but is to be read merely as a work of fiction, founded upon the rock of indisputable fact.

I.

When Patrick Carolan Breagh attained the age of six years, the boy being tall enough to view his own topknot of scarlet curls and freckled snub nose in the big shining mirror of his stepmother's toilet-table, without standing on the tin bonnet-box that was kept under the chintz cover, or climbing on a chair,—he was fated to acquire, during one brief half-hour's concealment under a Pembroke table, more knowledge of Life, Death, and the value of Money, than would otherwise have come to him in the course of half a dozen more years.

Upon this unforgettable third of January, his plaid frock had been taken off, and to his infinite delight, replaced by a little pair of blue cloth breeches and a roundabout jacket. Amateurish as to cut, the nether garments displaying so little difference fore and aft that it did not matter in the least which way you faced when you stepped into them, they were yet splendid,—not only in Carolan's eyes. Alan, his junior by three years, bellowed with envy on beholding them; and four-year-old Monica sucked her finger and stared with all her might.

It was plain to Carolan, that, having once assumed the manly garments, no boy could be expected to put on those hateful petticoats again. In vain Nurse Povah,—who had been Carolan's foster-mother,—and Miss Josey, the governess, explained to him that the breeches were not completed, and directed his eyes to the mute evidence of pins, chalk-marks, and yellow basting-threads. Their arguments were vain, their entreaties addressed to deaf ears. An

attempt to remove the cause of contention by force resulted in Nurse's being butted, though not hard ! and Miss Josey kicked with viciousness. In the confusion that ensued, the rebel effected an escape from the scene of combat. And the door of the sitting-room being open, Carolan trotted across the Government cocoa-nut matting of the landing with the intention of confessing his own misdeeds, since Miss Josey was quite certain to report him at headquarters, had not this often-tested method of blunting the edge of retributory justice failed, through his own fault.

For upon entering the large, shabbily furnished room, situated on the second floor of a gaunt, gray stone building known as Block D, Married Officers' Quarters—the room that served Captain Breagh and his second wife as sitting-room, dining-room, smoking-room and boudoir — Carolan became aware that his stepmother, quite unconscious of his intrusion, was dusting the china vases on the mantel-shelf; and was instantly possessed by the conviction that it would be huge fun to hide under the large round table that occupied the middle of the worn Brussels carpet, and bounce out upon the poor lady when she turned, making her say " Owh !"

So the boy noiselessly dived under the deep, hanging, silk-fringed border of the Indian shawl that covered the circular Pembroke table, upon which were ranged, about a central basket of wax fruit and flowers, gilt frames with spotty daguerrotypes, albums of scraps, Books of Beauty containing the loveliest specimens of Early Victorian female aristocracy, and Garlands of Poetry reeking with the sentimental effusions of Eliza Cook and L. E. L., interspersed with certain card-cases and paper-knives of Indian carved ivory and sandal-wood, and other trifles of brass and filigree-ware.

The big, shabbily furnished second-floor room had three windows looking out upon the gravelled expanse of the

Parade-ground, and commanding a view of the flower-bedded patch of sacred green turf, enclosed by posts and chains, that graced the front of the pillared, pedimented, and porticoed building that housed the Officers' Mess. And when the regiment got the route for another garrison town, nearly everything the room contained—from the Pembroke centre-table and chintz-covered sofa, to the secrétaire at which Captain Breagh penned his letters, the big leather-covered arm-chair in which he sat, and the Bengal tiger-skin hearthrug,—would be packed,—with the picture of the Duke of Wellington at the Battle of Vimiera, and the chimney-glass over which it always hung—into wooden cases, with the before-mentioned chimney-glass, curtains and carpets, beds, baths, uniform-cases and a great number of other things; and then after a period of rumbling confusion there would be a new sitting-room looking on another barrack-square, other bedrooms and a fresh nursery,—and Carolan would forget the old ones in something under a week. As a matter of fact, the regiment had been shifted four times since its return from India, when Carolan was little more than a baby, and Monica and Alan and Baba were nowhere at all.

Now either Mrs. Breagh occupied an unconscionable time in dusting the vases and making up the fire for her Captain, who by reason of long service with the regiment in the East was susceptible to chill; or Carolan, with the mental instability shared by the child and the savage, lost interest in his new project and abandoned it. He was squatting silently in his hiding-place when Miss Josey entered ; he heard her complaint, noted down two spiteful exaggerations and one malicious falsehood, and witnessed the exhibition of a bulgy ankle in a badly-gartered white cotton stocking surmounting an elastic-sided cloth boot. When the governess withdrew, consoled by Mrs. Breagh's sympathy, Nurse Povah was summoned from the other

side of the landing by a tinkle of the hand-bell, and bore stout witness on the culprit's side.

"Did ye see her leg, I'd make so bould as ask, or did ye take her worrud for ut? And—av there was anythin' to show barrin' a flaybite, is ut natheral a boy wud parrut wid his furrst breeches widout a kick? Sure, they're the apple av his eye, and the joy av his harrut! And her—wid her talk av bendin' his will and breakin' his temper! is ut like ye wud lay a finger on the Captain's eldest son, to plaze the likes of her?"

"The Captain has said himself—over and over—that a sound thrashing would be a capital thing for Carry," Mrs. Breagh returned.

"He praiches—ay, bedad!—but does he ever practuss?" demanded Nurse, smoothing her apron with stout, matronly hands, and getting very red in the cheeks. "Niver fear but he'd be too wise to bring a curse upon himself by ill-thrating a motherless child!"

"*Motherless!*" What did the word mean? Carolan wondered, recalling how Nurse would describe some particularly down-hearted person as being as long in the jaw as a motherless calf. And now Mrs. Breagh was saying, in the kind of voice some good people use for the purpose of Scriptural quotation, and which is not in the least like their accents of every day . . .

"Solomon said, 'He that spareth the rod'—but you Catholics *never* seem to read the Bible. And I always treat Carolan as if he were my own child—and you know I do! 'Ssh! Here comes the Captain—and I *think* I hear Baba crying. . . ."

And Nurse, with the honours of war, retired to the nursery on the other side of the landing, as Captain Breagh's hasty footsteps and the jingle of his scabbard were heard on the stone stair. A minute later he entered the room. But during the minute's interval Carolan had had time to

ponder, mentally digest and form a conclusion from what he had just heard.

It had never previously occurred to him that the stout, dark, beady-eyed, brightly-dressed lady whom he had been taught to call Mamma was not really his mother, but he knew it now. It was revealed to him in one lightning-flash of comprehension that this was the reason why her hands felt so like hands of wood whenever they touched him, and why her kiss,—religiously administered night and morning—was a thing he would much sooner have gone without. He knew,—and something inside him was glad to know—that it was not wicked of him not to love her as he loved Nurse, or Monica, or Ponto the brown retriever. And then his heart dropped like a leaden plummet to the pit of his infant stomach. This was to be a day of discoveries. He had discovered that by kicking out lustily it had been possible to resist the forcible removal of his new breeches. He had discovered that "Mamma" was not his real, real mother! Would Daddy turn out to be Monica's and Alan's and Baba's Daddy, and not Carolan's, after all?

A sob rose in his throat, and his hot, dry eyes began to smart and water. But the manly trampling and clanking came nearer. The door opened—his father was in the room. He could only see his shiny Wellington boots, and the bottoms of the red-striped dark blue breeches that were strapped over them. But familiar knowledge built from the boots the handsome manly figure in the light brick-red coat with the Royal blue facings, the China and Punjab war-medals, the crimson sash and the other martial accoutrements topped by the stiff leather stock, and the head whose wealth of jet-black curls and luxuriant bushy whiskers might have been the glory of a fashionable hairdresser's window, in combination with the well-cut features, light blue eyes, and fine rosy complexion, as yet scarcely deteriorated by Mess port, whisky punch, and late hours.

Captain Breagh kissed Mrs. Breagh with a hearty smack that made Carolan start in his hiding-place, and said the wind was enough to cut you in two, and that the fire looked tempting, as he laid down his pipeclayed gloves and dress-schako with the gilt grenade and white ball-tuft on the aged and dilapidated sideboard, and permitted his lady to relieve him of his sword. Then he rubbed his hands and thrust them to the blaze enjoyingly, and threw himself into the creaking leathern arm-chair. This, it suddenly occurred to Carolan, would be a favourable moment for emerging from concealment. He had got on all-fours, ready to appear in the character of a bear or tiger, when Mrs. Breagh stopped him by beginning to tell tales. The child was beyond control, she declared—there was no end to his naughtiness. For the sake of his immortal soul, something would have to be done. . . .

"What's he been doing? For my own part—I wouldn't give a brass farthing for a pup that wouldn't bite, or a boy that wouldn't show fight when he was put to it!" The arm-chair creaked suggestively as the Captain stretched out his legs, and the firelight danced in the polish of his boots, hardly dimmed by the dry gravel of the parade-ground. "And it's in the blood, that high spirit. Don't suppose I'm bragging that the Breaghs are any great shakes in the way of family!—though the name's as decent a one as you'll meet in a long day's march. But Carolan's a Fermeroy on the mother's side—and they're a hot-headed, high-handed breed," the Captain added, taking the newspaper from the Pembroke table, "and have been ever since the year One—if you take the trouble to look 'em up in Irish History. Not that I've ever read any, but my poor Milly used to say——"

His wife's eyes snapped with irrepressible jealousy at the reference to her predecessor. "And everything that came from her you took for Gospel, I suppose?"

"Pretty near!" said Captain Breagh, and began to unfold his newspaper.

"I get little enough time for reading things that are useful," said Mrs. Breagh, as the Captain dipped into the crackling sheets. "It was my bounden duty to speak, and I've done it! And if you think you are doing your duty by the child—let alone his mother——"

She broke off, for the Captain bounced in his chair, and dashed down the newspaper. "Haven't I told you I won't have poor Milly's name dragged into these discussions! She's dead!—and so let her be!"

If a lady can be said to snort, Mrs. Breagh gave utterance to a sound of that nature.

"I'm willing, Alexander, I'm sure! But all things considered, I must say I think it's a pity her ladyship died and left you a widower!"

"And you're right there, begad you are! And how many times have I told you she was merely an Honourable, and not her ladyship!" He left the newspaper sprawling on the hearthrug, and mechanically reaching down his pipe and tobacco-pouch from the corner of the mantelshelf, proceeded to fill the well-browned meerschaum, and when his wife lighted a spill and held it to him as an olive-branch, he thanked her in an absent way. What did the Captain see as he pulled at the gnawed amber mouthpiece and stared into the red-hot heart of the fire, communing with that other self that dwells within every man?

II.

I THINK he saw young Alex Breagh, a junior Lieutenant of the Grenadier company of the Royal Ennis Regiment of Infantry, winning his spurs of manhood under Gough and Hardinge and Gilbert on the plain beside the Sutlej, where stands Ferozshahr.

"For I don't pretend to be a hero or anything of that sort, but I've never shirked my share of fighting," said the silent voice within him, and the Captain exhaled a spirt of smoke and mumbled: "I believe you!" And the other Breagh went on:

"Fair play and no favour won us our honours, mind you! though the chance didn't come until later on. True, we helped Sir Harry Smith to pound the Sikhs at Ferozshahr and at Aliwal, when the cavalry of his Right had driven the Khâlsas back across the Red Ford. Waiting for the elephants with the heavy siege-guns and the ammunition, and stores, to come up from Delhi, took a hell of a time. Seven long weeks of broiling by day and freezing o' nights, while Tij Sinh and his thirty-five thousand Khâlsas entrenched themselves, mounted their heavy artillery—made their bridge of boats, and encamped their cavalry up the river. But the day came—our day!—and I don't forget that foggy tenth of February while I'm breathing."

Captain Breagh sucked at his pipe and reflectively pulled a whisker. And the silent voice went on:

"We were with the Left Division under General Dick, and led the assault, while Gilbert and Smith feigned to attack on the enemy's left and centre. And in that charge, —when the General got his death-wound from a swivel-ball,—I was the second red-coat to cross the ditch, and scramble over the big mud rampart, and sabre a Sikh gunner with his linstock in his hand! . . ."

Mrs. Breagh, chagrined at remaining so long the object of her husband's inattention, picked up his fallen newspaper and almost timidly laid it on his knee. And the child under the table kept as quiet as a mouse, almost . . .

"Thank ye, my dear!" said the Captain, while the other Breagh went on:

"And when the Treaty was signed and the rumpus all

over—for the time !—because Dalhousie's bungling brought the hornets about our ears again !—we marched from Lahore to Calcutta with Great Britain's victorious army—barring the force we'd left with Lawrence at Mian Mir."

The silence continuing, Mrs. Breagh drew her work-table towards her, and began to look over a basket of little toeless and heel-less stockings. As she did this she sighed. The Captain smoked thoughtfully. And the inward voice went on:

" The Governor-General and his staff rode with Sir Harry Smith and the Advance—and between the Cavalry Brigade that came after 'em—for Sir Harry swore he'd be damned but since we'd seen the hottest of the fighting, we should have the post of honour !—between the Cavalry and Ours came the spoils of war, drawn by the Government elephants —two hundred and fifty Sikh guns we'd taken at Sobrâon. Hah !"

The Captain's eyes were fixed on the fire. He smoked in quick, short puffs.

" Standards waving, bands blowing their heads off, and a bit o' loot in most men's knapsacks. Glory for the dead, and praise and promotion for the living—begad ! it was worth while—just then !—to be a British soldier ! And I'd been wounded just enough to look interesting, and got a Special Mention in Despatches—and the women were pulling caps for me,—devil a lie in that ! And I danced with Milly at the Welcome Back Ball at Government House, in March, 1846. And whether it was Fate—or that way she had of looking up under her eyelashes, and showing a laughing mouth full of tiny pearly-white teeth over the top of her fan, I've never been quite clear. But even before the steward introduced Lieutenant Breagh to the Hon. Millicent Fermeroy, I'd fallen head over ears in love with Milly, and she was as mad for me !"

Still silence reigned in the room, only broken by the

cinders falling on the hearth, and the breathing of three people. Mrs. Breagh still bent over her basket of little worn socks, of which those in most crying need of darning belonged to Carolan. Her lips were tightly closed, but as the man within her husband talked to the man, the woman within the woman talked to his wife.

"I wonder whether he knows I know he's thinking of *her* again? I wonder whether she'd have liked to sit and toil and moil for a child of mine, and know that the other woman held the first place in his heart? Ah, dear me!"

She glanced at her husband. He did not see her. He was living in the Past.

"Nobody noticed how often we danced together. . . . It had gone pretty far with us before Her Ladyship scented what was in the wind, and sent an *aide-de-camp* to remind Miss Fermeroy that the doctor had set down his foot against her overheating herself with waltzing,—and I found myself staring after her with her bouquet in my hand. . . . And I took it home to quarters—and I've got it now, stowed away with her letters and a lot of other things in a tin uniform-case. . . . Fanny hasn't an idea of that!"

The smoke-puffs came more slowly, and the darning-needle now worked busily. The voice of a sergeant who was drilling a squad of recruits came in gruff barks from the Parade.

"The Fermeroys were great folks. . . . Colonel Lord Augustus Fermeroy—Milly's uncle, was a tremendous Light Cavalry swell on the Commander-in-Chief's Staff. Of course, I knew that he would never hear of an engagement between his brother's orphan daughter—(to do the old man justice, he loved her as his own!)—and a Lieutenant of a marching regiment of infantry who'd nothing but his pay. So—as Milly and me had made up our minds we couldn't live without each other,—we were married secretly —first at a Protestant Mission Church, and then by a

French Franciscan *padre*—and *he* made bones about splicing us—because I wasn't a Catholic,—and if I hadn't told a white lie or two about my intention of turning Papist, I don't believe he'd have tied the knot. But all's fair in love!—and we were in love with a vengeance. I suppose I was a selfish beggar to coax Milly into deceiving her people, but——"

A long ray of chilly January sunshine, full of dancing dust-motes, came in at the window. Mrs. Breagh sneezed as it fell across her face.

"A time came when I knew I had been as selfish as she never would have called me. People had to be told!—so we enlightened 'em by shooting the moon. The condition of my war-chest wasn't over and above flourishing, but I got a month's leave for the Mofussil and secured a twenty-rupee furnished bungalow at Titteghur—and next morning—before the hue and cry had well begun, Lady Augustus got a *chit* from Milly by *harkára*—I remember every word of it. '*Dearest Aunt,—I hope you have not been alarmed, supposing me to have been murdered or carried off by wicked persons. I am safe and happy with my own dear husband, from whom I shall never be parted now.*' "

The pipe was nearly smoked out, but the Captain did not appear aware of that.

"'*Never be parted,*' and before three months were over our heads . . ."

Clash! Mrs. Breagh had let her scissors fall. Her husband made a long arm, picked them up, and gave them back to her.

"Thank you, Alex, love!" said Mrs. Breagh effusively. But he went on sucking at the now empty pipe, and staring at the waning fire. And the voice went on:

"The Fermeroys were furious. But there was no use in making a fuss and a scandal, and I must say they took the blow awfully well. Good haters both—declared that under

no conceivable circumstances would they ever admit within their doors an officer who had acted so dishonourably, but they'd receive Milly whenever she liked to come. Nor would they—though her uncle was her guardian and trustee—deprive her of her fortune—seven thousand pounds in East India Stock, Home Rails, and Government Three Per Cents. But they tied it up tight for the benefit of the child that was coming, and others that might come—in what they called a Post-Matrimonial Settlement, and I was agreeable; though, mind you!—I had the law on my side if I'd chosen to make a fuss. And I was too much in love to bother over money—or to care a cowrie about being cut by the Fermeroys' friends."

Nothing but gray ashes remained in the pipe-bowl.

"I don't know whether it wasn't to get me out of the way that the regiment was ordered to Sikandarabad. There'd been a Sepoy rising at Haidarabad, six miles north of the Subsidiary Force's cantonments—and as the big Mussulman city was swarming with all the blackguards and *budmashes* in the Dekkan—and bazar-*gup* had it that another Rohilla riot was threatening—Ours got the route to go. And Milly—God bless her! wouldn't hear of being left behind. And we steamed down coast to Masulipatam, and marched the two hundred miles; and though it was early in January, the roads were confoundedly squashy and the heat was like a vapour-bath—there being no winter to speak of in the South."

"He's in a regular brown study," said her unseen gossip and confidante to the Captain's second wife. "Perhaps his tailor has been dunning him, or he's been losing at cards? When men are out of spirits, money's generally at the bottom of it! Better get him to tell what's the matter by-and-by—not now!"

"And the long road ran like a brown snake between mangrove-swamps and paddy-fields, where it wasn't coffee-

plantations and cotton-ground. And there were black-buck and partridge for the shooting when you could get away from the columns; and duck and snipe when we were hung up at the river-fords waiting for the elephants that were to take over the baggage and guns."

The shouts of the drill-sergeant came more faintly from the Parade-ground. The Captain seemed to doze as he sucked at the empty pipe, but Memory's voice went on:

"The women and children of the rank and file were carried on the baggage-waggons, and the officers' wives travelled by bullock-*tonga* or *palki-dak*, under an escort of good-conduct men of the Subsidiary Force the Brigadier had sent down from cantonments. Milly laughed at their oilskin-covered wickerwork chimney-pot hats and little old red coatees, and black unmentionables and bare sandalled feet. But they couldn't keep the beggars of bearers from turning out of the road and taking short-cuts through jungle-paths. Then they'd dump the *palkis* down in the shade, and light a fire of sticks, and squat round and smoke their hubble-bubbles or chew betel. . . . And Milly's blackguards had gone out of sight behind some trees, and she was scared at finding herself alone and unprotected. And she tried to be calm and plucky, thinking of—what she and me were looking for. . . . But something trotted out of a cane-brake and snuffed at the *palki*-curtains—and she went off in a dead faint and small blame to her! For there were the prints of a full-grown tiger's pugs in the soft ground round the palanquin—and the place where his hind-claws had torn up the grass when he bounded off. . . ."

The forgotten pipe was upside down in the smoker's mouth now. A pinch of ashes had fallen upon the breast of the unhooked scarlet coat.

"When I came up I made those coolie-brutes eat plenty stick. But Milly—poor girl! had got her death-blow. And

the boy was born that night under canvas by the roadside. And old Murderer—Surgeon-Major Murdoch of Ours—did all man could do to save her. But—just at dawn—with the eastern sky all lemon-yellow and pink and madder behind a mango-*tope*, with a Hindu temple near it, and a clump of mud huts—and some old saint's shrine under a sacred *peepul*-tree—the boy was born and the mother went out like a blown waxlight. Oh, my darling! . . . And the Catholic chaplain—who'd been fetched to give Milly the Last Sacraments—baptised the boy, for Milly had made me swear all the children should be of her faith. And the boy would have died, too, but that my company Sergeant's wife—she that is nurse to my youngest child to-day—happened to be able and willing to suckle him. And we struck camp and set out on the last march, carrying a corpse and a new-born baby. And that night we buried my girl by torchlight in the cemetery belonging to the European infantry-barracks. And it's six years ago to-day—and here I am married to another woman! Are you happy with her, Alex Breagh? She's as unlike the other as chalk's different from cheese—and poor Milly 'ud have called her a vulgar person! I know she would! And yet—Milly never gave me a decent meal, and the servants did as they liked! and Fanny's a rare housekeeper. I've been more comfortable since I married her than I ever was in my life before. Yes, I'm a happy man! . . ."

He told himself this continually. And yet the knowledge of material comfort could not long silence the crying of his heart.

He took the smoked-out pipe from his mouth, and turned to look at the plump, high-coloured, personable woman who was sitting darning his children's stockings with his wedding-ring shining on her finger, and the present had its value for him, and he ceased to company with the

dead. His regard, at first chill and gloomy, warmed: his good-humoured smile curled his full red lips again. . . .

"Why, how you look, love!" said Mrs. Breagh, and she rose and came to his side. Then she sat on his knee and smoothed his hair from his forehead. And the Captain returned her kiss, and told himself that true wisdom lay in making the best of one's luck generally, and being grateful for whatever good the gods chose to grant.

"No use crying over spilt milk! . . . Beg pardon, my dear!—but what were you asking me?"

"I was asking—supposing Carolan had never been born—or had died—whether you would have come into his mother's money?"

"Would I have inherited Milly's seven thousand pounds? Not a halfpenny of it, my dear! In the event of her decease without issue it would have gone back to her family. And even during Milly's lifetime she only had the half-yearly interest. Couldn't sell out stock, or raise a lump sum for—ahem!—for the benefit of any person she'd a mind to help. And husband and wife are one flesh, so the Bible tells you!"

"The poor thing that's gone ought to have had more spirit than to let you be treated so!" said the second wife, who had possessed no fortune beyond a hundred pounds or so, bestowed as dowry on his younger daughter by the hard-worked apothecary of an English country town; and was conscious that in marrying her the Captain had not aspired to a union above his social rank.

"Begad! my dear! I don't mind owning that Lord Augustus hated me, from the top hair of my head to the last peg in my boot-sole. And—when he died—and he did go over to the majority not long after the Fermeroys had sailed for England with Lord Hardinge—when he died it didn't make a pin's difference, for under that settlement I've told you of, the co-trustee, a solicitor—Mr. Mustey, of

Furnival's Inn, Holborn, London—took his son,—who'd been made partner in his business—as his partner in the trusteeship. And, of course, the money's the boy's!—though the two-hundred-and-twenty-odd annual interest is paid to me—the whole of it!—until Carry's old enough to go to school and college—and when he reaches twenty-three the whole lump of the principal will be his—seven thousand golden sovereigns—to play ducks and drakes with if he likes!"

"And my poor darlings will have nothing," Mrs. Breagh bleated, "unless,—because I've treated Carolan in all respects—and more!—as if he were my own child, and that I would declare with my head upon my dying pillow!—unless he has the gratitude and the decent feeling to do something for Alan,—if it's only giving him a few hundreds to start him properly in life. . . ."

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," advised her lord. "My dear, if you'll get me the materials from the sideboard, I'll wet my whistle. Talking's dry work!"

With wifely compliance Mrs. Breagh placed the whisky-decanter and the Delhi clay-bottle of drinking-water near her Alexander's elbow. You are to imagine the Captain mixing a jorum on half-and-half principles, nodding to his Fanny, and taking a refreshing swig of the cooling draught. And at this juncture a head of scarlet curls was poked out from the covert of the Indian shawl tablecloth, and the clear treble of his eldest son piped out:

"Dada, how much money is seven fousand golding sovereigns? And how long will it be before I get them to make ducks and drakes?"

III.

You are to suppose Captain Breagh, startled by the unexpected apparition of his eldest son, swallowing the whole jorum of whisky and water at a gulp, and his wife dropping her darning into her lap with the very exclamation Carolan had previously promised himself. Still as a mouse, he had lain in ambush beneath the Pembroke table, with the portrait of the Duke of Wellington on a gray charger in the foreground of the highly-varnished oil-painting — representing the Royal Ennis Regiment in the performance of prodigies of gallantry in conflict with the French at Vimiera —staring with bolting blue eyes, and pointing at him with a Field-Marshal's *bâton* whenever he had peeped out.

Now, conscious of having made an impression, and with a curious mixture of sensations, emotions, impulses, fermenting in a brain of six years, the boy stood upright before his elders, his well-knit shoulders thrown back, his sturdy legs, arrayed in their virile coverings of blue cloth adorned with cat-stitches of yellow basting-thread, planted wide apart upon the tiger-skin hearthrug, and his stomach thrust forward with the arrogance characteristic of the newly-made capitalist.

"Why the devil were you hiding there? Eh, you young Turk, you?" blustered the Captain.

"Eavesdroppers," said Mrs. Breagh acidly, "never go to Heaven."

"Farver Haygarty——" Carolan began.

"We don't want to know what Father Haygarty says!" snapped Mrs. Breagh, whose Protestant gorge rose at the Papistical teachings of the regimental chaplain. And then she remembered that in a few years the worldly prospects of her three children might depend on the good-will of this chubby-faced, red-haired urchin who stood silently before

her, contemplating her with a new expression in a very round pair of oddly amber-flecked gray eyes. And being a weak, ill-balanced, underbred woman, and a mother into the bargain, she truckled, as such women will, to the latent potentialities vested in the stubborn wearer of the unfinished suit of clothes.

"Not but what Father Haygarty is a good man and much respected—and I dare say you're sorry for having kicked poor Josey. So, since it's your birthday we won't say any more about it—and Nurse shall pull out those basting-threads and sew on the brace-buttons when you're in bed to-night——"

"There! you hear! Stop, you young rascal! Come back and kiss your mother, and thank her, and run away to Mrs. Povah!" bade the Captain, for Carolan, driving a pair of grubby fists deep into the pockets of the new breeches, had swung contemptuously upon his heel, and made for the door.

"She's not my muvver!" said the son, pausing in his struggle with the door-handle to turn a flushed and frowning face upon his sire. "She said so just now and so did you!"

"Then shut the door!" thundered the Captain, but it had slammed before the words were fairly out. And Carolan stamped across the landing whistling defiantly, and burst into the nursery, where Baba—for the moment its sole occupant—was asleep in her bassinette, Alan and Monica having gone out to walk with Miss Josey, and Nurse being busy in the adjoining room.

Carolan's head was hot, and his heart felt big and swollen. He was a person of consequence, and at the same time a thing of no account. Thus the pride that flamed in his gray eyes was presently quenched by scalding salt drops of resentful indignation. He was sorrowful, elated, angry, and complacent, all at once, as he stood by Baba's crib.

He had never until now suspected Mrs. Breagh was not his mother. He had called her "Mamma" ever since he could speak. No question had ever risen in his mind as to the existence of some secret reason for her dislike of him.

When she had seemed most hateful in his eyes, by reason of her lacking reticence and absent sense of honour—for she couldn't keep a secret if she promised you ever so, and was always telling tales of you to Dada!—Carolan had frequently relieved his feelings by going into corners and calling her "that woman" under his breath. The appalling sense of crime, involved with the relief this process brought—for to call your real mother names would be a sin of the first magnitude—had invested it with a dreadful fascination. Now the glamour had vanished, together with the wickedness. Mrs. Breagh was nothing to Carolan. He was the son of another woman—and she was dead in India. Her name was Milly—a gentle, prettily-sounding name.

Only the day before, Carolan had found out what the thing grown-up people called "death" and "dying" meant. He had given a shiny sixpence that had lain hidden for weeks at the bottom of the pocket in his old plaid frock to Bugler Finnerty for a thrush he had limed, a beautiful brown thrush with a splendidly dappled breast. Only the bird's eyes looked like beads of dull jet glass instead of round black blobs of diamond-bright bramble-dew. And it had squatted on the foul floor of the little wood and wire cage in which Finnerty had been keeping it, panting, with ruffled feathers and open beak.

Finnerty had said that the bird would thrive on snails and worms, and Carolan had promised it plenty of these luxuries. He had meant to range for them through all the soldiers' vegetable-allotments, and ransack the Parade-ground flower-beds. But all at once the thrush had fallen over on its side, fluttering and struggling—and Carolan

had been so sorry for it that he had thrust his pudgy hand into the cage, and taken the poor sufferer out with the intention of nursing it in his pinafore for a little, and then letting it go free, since it was so unhappy in captivity.

But when he had bidden it fly away it had had no strength to do so. It had lain helpless in his hands, and the strange quivering thrills that had passed through its slender body had communicated themselves to the child. Something was taking place — some change was coming. Without previous knowledge he had been sure of that.

And the change had come, with the drawing of the thin grey membrane from the corners next the beak, over the round yellow-rimmed eyes. Then the upper and under-lids had sealed themselves over the veiled eyeballs—the quick panting had changed to long gasps, the head had rolled to one side helplessly—and with a long shuddering convulsion the thing had taken place. The slender body had stiffened in Carolan's hand, the glossy wings had closed down tightly against its dappled sides, its scaly legs had stretched out rigidly and not been drawn back again. And a voice that seemed to speak inside Carolan had said to him: "This is death!"

Now broke in upon his immature brain a flash of blinding brilliancy. Milly, who had been his mother, was dead, like the thrush. The snuffing Thing that had come out of the jungle had frightened her, and she had died under canvas by the roadside. He shut his eyes, and saw her lying, very pale and pretty and helpless, with ruffled brown hair the exact colour of the bird's feathers, and beautiful brown eyes—why was he so certain that they had been brown?—all dim and filmy, and her slender body and long graceful limbs now quivering and convulsed, and now growing rigid and stiff. And a lump rose in his throat, and a tear splashed on the front of the brand-new

blue jacket, and another that would have fallen was dried by a glow of inspiration. For he had dug a grave with a sherd of broken flower-pot in the angle of one of the official flower-beds that decorated the oblong patch of lawn before the Mess House, and buried the dead thrush in the shelter of a clump of daffodils, and said a "Hail Mary!" for it, because, though Miss Josey and Mrs. Breagh—whom he would never call "mamma" again!—termed it a Popish practice—Father Haygarty said that one ought to pray for the dead. . . .

Surely one ought to pray for the soul of Milly. She would understand, it was to be hoped! why one had never done it before. Somebody would tell her Carolan hadn't known! Poor, poor Milly! He wished he had been there with his new tin sword when that snuffing Thing came out of the jungle and frightened her so that she had died. . . .

He looked about the nursery. There stood Monica's Indian-cane cot, and Alan's green-painted iron crib on either side of Nurse's wooden four-poster. At the bed-head above Nurse's pillow was nailed a little plaster Calvary, and a miniature holy-water stoup, and over Carolan's little folding camp-bedstead hung a noble crucifix of ebony and carved ivory, so large and so massive that two iron staples held it in its place.

The Face of the pendent, tortured Figure—there was death in that also. It seemed to the child that the breast beneath the drooped, thorn-encircled Head, heaved with long sighs, that the lips gasped for breath—that long shuddering spasms rippled through the tortured Body, bringing home, as nothing ever had before, the meaning of the lines that the boy had learned as a parrot might. . . .

"*He was crucified also for us . . . suffered . . . and was buried. . . .*"

And that was why we prayed to Him for the dead and

buried people, because He had suffered death and gone down into the dark grave, and He knew how to help souls. . . . Carolan nailed his resolution to say a nightly "Our Father" for poor Milly to the masthead of determination, unaware that Father Haygarty had incurred the displeasure of Mrs. Breagh by urging the necessary discharge of this filial duty as a reason why the boy should be told about his mother who was dead.

We may guess that the influence of the second wife had inspired the Captain to insist that the hour of enlightenment should be deferred indefinitely. And if anyone had suggested to Mrs. Breagh that she had been prompted by a belated jealousy of her predecessor, she would have been genuinely horrified at the idea.

Nurse came in as Carolan decided on his course of future loyalty, and started at the sight of the sturdy little figure standing, with legs planted wide apart, on the shabby nursery drugget, its childish brows puckered with profound thought.

"Now may the Saints stand between you and the mischief I know you're plannin'!" said Nurse, who prided herself on reading thoughts in faces. "Is ut playin' acreybats on the windy-sill, or shavin' wid the Captain's razor? Spake ut out!"

Carolan spoke.

"Mamma is not my muvver, an' I shall call her Mrs. Breagh *always!*"

"God be good to me!" said Nurse, quite pale, and putting her hand to her side. "An' who tould ye that, an' set the two eyes of ye blazin' like coals of fire?"

"You saided it!—and she saided it—and Dada saided it—when I was playin' robber's cave under the sittin'-woom table," Carolan proclaimed. "And I'm goin' to pray for Milly—that's my weal muvver—because she's dead—even if they say I shan't!"

"There'll none durst," said Nurse rather awfully, "wid Bridget Povah to the fore! And what else?"

Slightly damped by the prospect of being permitted to carry out his shining new intention without interruption, Carolan reflected.

"Nuffing," he said at last, "'cept that I want to know how much is seven fousand golding sovereigns? For I am going to have them when I grow up."

"Sure!" said Nurse, slightly bewildered, "a sovereign is the same as a wan-pound note! Ye have seen thim things, have ye not?"

Carolan had seen the soiled rags of Bank paper changing hands on market-days, and the recollection wrinkled his nose.

"'Tis quare talk ye have," said Nurse, "about the sivin thousand wan-pound notes. 'Tis a little haystack av' them ye would be gettin' from the gintleman at the Bank. Where arr ye goin' now, ye onaisy wandherer? Wid your hoop for a rowl in the Barrack-square? Take your cap—an' remimber that wheniver ye're clane out av' sight, Biddy Povah has her eye on you!"

But Carolan was already out of the room and half-way down the stairs.

Outside under the blue sky, with its flocks of fleecy white clouds all hurrying southwards, it was easy to forget the things that had hurt. The crackle of the sandy gravel underfoot, the purr of the iron hoop in the metal driving-hook soothed and stimulated; the ringing clatter when one got upon the cobblestones, and the echo when one came under the archway of the Barrack-gate—were familiar, pleasant things.

Familiar, too, was the sentry on guard, great-coated—for at all times and seasons of the year a nipping wind howled through the stony tunnel that ended in the arch of

the Barrack-gateway—and pacing his official strip of pavement, that began at the yellow-painted sentry-box with the blunt lamp-post near it, and ended at the big spiked gate. And the peep into the guardroom, with unbuttoned privates in the familiar red coats with Royal blue facings, sprawling on plank beds reading thumbed newspapers, and the sergeant sitting on his cot stiffly stocked and fully accoutred—that had the charm of a well-known, never too familiar sight. To other senses besides the eyes and ears appealed the figure of Mary Daa, the apple, cake and ginger-pop woman, sitting under a vast and oddly-patched blue gingham umbrella at her stall, made of a short plank mounted on two barrels, against the great bare wall on the left of the Barrack-entrance, exercising a privilege permitted to no other, because Mary's stone ginger-pop bottles might be relied upon as containing nothing else. . . .

It was market-day, and the great cobble-stoned place, bordered by a line of shops and houses, broken by the bridge, under which flowed a famous salmon-river, was seething with people out to buy and sell and enjoy themselves. On the right hand was the Catholic Church, a modern building of no great design, animated bundles of rags containing female penitents performing the devotion of the Stations round it. While upreared upon the summit of an isolated rock beyond the rushing river, perched the ivy-mantled remnant of the ancient castle from which the town derived its name; once held against the Commonwealth by King James, and with Ireton's round-shot yet bedded in the massive masonry.

The distracting grind-organ accompaniment of a roundabout blared on the ear from a field where some caravans of strolling show-people had encamped themselves. Rows of empty jaunting-cars, shafts down, waited their squireen owners in the bleakest angle of the market-place; and in the

farm-carts with feather-beds in them, covered with gay patchwork counterpanes, the strapping matrons and buxom maids of the hill-farms or mountain-villages had jolted and joggled from their distant homes, and—the last bargain made—would jolt and joggle back again.

Booths and stalls presided over by them, exhibited cheese, butter, and other dairy-produce. Crates were crammed with quacking ducks and loudly cackling fowls. Strings of shaggy-footed horses and knots of isolated cows were ranged along the kerbs to tempt the would-be purchaser; hurdled pens of sheep waited to change owners; but the staple article of commerce, in the active and the passive mood, alive and squealing or dead and smoked, was pig. In reeking basements below the shops—cellars where potatoes, cabbages, and onions were peddled to the poorest, and turf and firewood were sold in ha'p'orths, piles of pigs-tails, fresh and dried, rivalled the salted herring in popularity; and were borne home, wrapped in red-spotted handkerchiefs, and stowed away in the crowns of hats, to be frizzled over turf-embers for supper.

A jig was being danced to the music of a fiddle and a clarionet on a square of smooth flagstones in the middle of the market-place. And—for this was the West of Ireland in the early fifties—the bright red or dark blue cloaks and white frilled caps of the matrons, the short stuff petticoats, chintz jacket-bodices and bright handkerchief-shawls of the unwedded women; the corduroy breeches, blue yarn stockings and buckled brogues of the men, their long-tailed gray or blue coats and high-crowned, narrow-brimmed chimney-pots—gave charm and variety to the shifting scene.

Not for the first time observed, the half-dozen of coarse, strapping, red-faced women who daily patrolled the square in the neighbourhood of the Barracks; whisky-hardened viragoes whose uncovered heads of greasy hair, thrust into

sagging nets of black chenille-velvet, and uniform attire of clean starched cotton print, worn over a multiplicity of whaleboned petticoats, bespoke them,—as did their coarse speech and loud laughter,—members of the ancient sisterhood of Rahab and Delilah, followers of the most ancient profession in the world.

Prone at all times to hunt in pack or couples, the wearers of the greasy hair-nets flauntingly displayed a pair of captive red-coats. One of them was fairly sober, and sulky at being thus paraded under the eyes of his countrymen. The other, a raw young recruit, half-fuddled with libations of porter and whisky, staggeringly promenaded the pavement with a siren on either elbow; and, being in the pugnacious stage of liquor, was stung by some sarcastic comment from the crowd into shaking off the women who supported while they feigned to lean on him,—and challenging the critic of morals, in broad Yorkshire, to a bout at fisticuffs.

"Leggo o' me, tha' ——!" he hiccoughed to the Paphians. "Cannowt a chap walk wi'out women-fowk hangin' on, an' armin' him? As for tha'!"—he addressed the critic—"Ah'll teach tha' to meddle wi' thy betters. If tha'rt a mon—coom on!"

"Fight, is ut? Och, ye poor craythur, the wind av a fist wud level ye," commented the censor, turning on his heel contemptuously. Upon which, the belligerent, taking the act as a confession of recreancy, wrenched himself from the women, and, staggering forwards, came into violent contact with Mary Daa's plank-and-barrel stall; with the result that certain apples, oranges, and cakes, displayed to tempt customers, were scattered on the flagged sidewalk, or rolled gaily down the gutter; pursued with yells of joy by certain ragged urchins who usually were to be found in the vicinity of Mary's stall.

Carolan clapped his hands with a child's delight in the

upset and the subsequent fray, as Mary, vociferating maledictions on the soldier's drunken clumsiness and the predatory activity of the raiders, shook her fists at their flying heels.

"Ah nivir meant t' dommage tha! Wull sixpence neet maak guid thy loss t' tha?" stammered the Yorkshireman, thrusting a hand into his trousers-pocket in search of the coin. Then his flaming face darkened heavily, and he said, withdrawing the hand, empty, "Ah havena a brass farden t' pitch at dog or devil, let alone sixpence. Mak't oop to her, Noorah lass, an' Ah'll gie't thee back agean!"

And the woman he had called Norah said, linking her arm in the soldier's and affectionately ogling him:

"Sure, I'll give the ould craythur a shillin', asthore, and a kiss av the handsome boy you are will pay me!"

Then happened what Carolan, with a child's intuitive sense of things that are incomprehensible, saw with a strange shock and thrill that never quite passed away.

The bright new shilling tendered to Mary by the plump clean fingers with the twinkling glass-and-pinchbeck rings on them was dashed to the flags by a fierce blow of the old, bony, wrinkled hand. . . .

"Take up yer money, ye livin' disgrace!" Mary had said sternly to the staring woman, "and thrapse upon your way!"

And under the regard of many eyes, for nearly all the faces in the crowded market-places seemed to be looking that way, the woman had picked up the coin; and as her comrades hurried on, had slunk after them, leaving the tipsy soldier standing there.

"Had ye no modher, ye fool-man?" Mary asked him, "that ye are hastin' quick to hell, arrum-in-arrum wid Thim Wans?"

And the tipsy young soldier had given a thick grunt that might have meant anything, and hung his head sulkily,

and gone staggering upon his way, but in an opposite direction to that taken by the women. And Mary Daa looked after him long and sorrowfully.

"Please tell me," asked Carolan, edging up to the apple-woman, for Mary and he had struck up a friendship over divers ha'p'orths of nuts and pink peppermint-candy sticks, "what are they, and why are they wicked?"

Mary brought round the weather-stained brown tunnel of her huge and venerable bonnet, and became aware of a small boy with a scarlet topknot and a pair of honest gray eyes.

"Who arr ye talkin' of?" she demanded, and there were shining drops of water on her wrinkled cheeks, and the cracked glasses of her huge iron-framed spectacles were foggy. She took them off, and wiped them on her old green plaid shawl, as Carolan explained that he had been referring to Thim Wans.

"What arr they? Wandherin' waves av the say, poisonous planets; thraps for the feet, fiery dhragons that ate up the bodies an' souls av men! Look me in the face wid your child's eyes, ye that will be a man wan day, an' get by harrut the worruds I'm spakin' to you! An' when the pith is set widin your bones, and the hair is thick upon your lip, and the blood is hot widin the veins av you—kape them worruds in mind!"

Carolan thanked Mary Daa, and, having a stray half-penny, purchased a cocked-hat of brown peppermint rock, and went home crunching. He had learned a good deal that day. The mystery of Death and the power of Money had been revealed to him. Also, he had gained some slight preliminary inkling of the forces that are arrayed against the human soul in its march through this strange world of ours, and of the strange and foul and ugly things that lie hidden beneath the shining surface of Life.

IV.

Furnival's Inn, Holborn, with its parallelogram of dusty or rain-washed cobble-stones unrelieved by any patch of railed-in grass plot, where sooty lilacs and rusty hawthorns make a show of putting forth green leaves in Spring, and plane-trees shed their bark, as boa-constrictors doff their skins—at the approach of Winter—Furnival's Inn, even in the year of stress 1870—impressed itself upon the casual visitor as a dismal spot in wet weather and a dusty one in dry. But that an immortal genius wrote a deathless work of humour in its cheerless precincts, one would have said that nothing young or gay or natural could ever flourish there.

At nine o'clock upon the morning of a day heavily fraught with Fate for the protagonist of this unpretending life-drama, recent puddles testified to overnight's rain, and gray clouds rushing north-westward across a monochromatic parallelogram of sky, framed in by the bilious-hued, grimy-windowed, decrepit-looking Inn buildings, predicted more presently.

Punctually upon the stroke of the hour you might have seen a shaggy young man in a red-hot hurry plunge under the round-topped carriage archway, eschewing the smaller side-entrance intended for pedestrians. Whereat the upper half of a porter, crowned with a tarred chimney-pot hat, and wearing a brown livery with copper-gilt buttons, appeared at the wicket of his lodge-door, and the fresh-faced, shaggy-haired boy in the battered felt wideawake and well-worn frieze overcoat, had felt an eye boring hard into his back, as, after one doubtful glance about him, he dived between the gouty Corinthian columns of the fourth portico on the left-hand side, and rang the first-floor bell.

"I'd ring if I was you!" the porter had soliloquised,

noting the masterful tug given by the early visitor to the dingy brass bell-handle—third of a row of six sticking out like organ-stops on the right of the heavy, low-browed outer door. "And again! . . . Don't be shy!" said the porter, who was something of a cynic: "Break the bell-wire, and then you won't have done no good to yourself!—supposing you to be a client or a creditor of Mustey and Son—though you're over-young to be the first and over-cheerful to be the second, it strikes me! Good-day, Mr. Chown!" And the porter touched his hat to a lean, mild-looking, elderly man in black, who turned in at that moment beneath the smaller archway. "You're not the first this morning, early as you are. There's a young chap who don't seem in the mind to take no answer—has been ringing ten minutes without stopping at Mr. Mustey's bell."

"Pressing business, I suppose, to bring him out so early!" said the person addressed.

A glance of intelligence may have been exchanged between Mr. Chown and the porter, but there were no further words. Mr. Chown passed on, and joined the younger man on the doorstep under the fourth portico on the left side, as he prepared to fulfil the porter's prophecy about breaking the bell-wire; and said, shifting his umbrella to the hand that held a shiny bag of legal appearance, and drawing a shabby latch-key from the pocket of his vest:

"Excuse me, but if it is a business appointment with Mr. Mustey Junior,"—he tapped the key upon the tarnished brass door-handle as though to knock some grains of dust out of the wards, and went on, punctuating his utterances with more tapping—"I happen to know"—*tap-tap-tap*—"that he won't be here to-day." He added, as he took a brief, comprehensive survey of the healthy, square-shouldered, well-built youngster of some five feet eight (with a hopeful promise of more inches in the breadth of the shoulders, and the depth of the chest), buttoned up in

the rough frieze garment that had seen hard wear;—"But possibly it is the head of the Firm" (*tap-tap*) "you want, and not Son? . . . In which case I'm afraid you'll have to wait some time, as the old gentleman stayed very late at work yesterday. I should mention that I am employed in the capacity of head-clerk by" (*tap*) "a firm of solicitors who have offices on the ground-floor immediately underneath Mustey and Son" (*tap*), "and——"

Mr. Chown, still industriously tapping, nodded at the lowest of a series of legends in letters of black paint, flanking the right-hand row of bells, and setting forth the titles of "Wotherspoon and Cadderby, Attorneys and Commissioners of Oaths." He continued: "And though I was detained myself, and did not leave till eight-thirty, I noticed particularly—when I shut the front-door behind me, that the gas in Mr. Mustey Senior's private room was burning still."

"For the matter of that, it's burning now!" said the strange young man, whose head was plentifully covered with a crop of decidedly red and obstinately curly hair, crowned with the battered gray felt wideawake previously mentioned; and whose square, blunt-featured, fresh-coloured, rather freckled face was illuminated with a pair of very clear and intelligent eyes of a good gray, curiously flecked with yellow. He indicated with a knotty vine-stick he carried, two dingy, wire-blinded windows on the first floor, and Messrs. Wotherspoon and Cadderby's head clerk, with an irrepressible start of consternation, saw that the darkness of the room behind them was thrown into relief by a greenish patch of radiance that indicated the position of a paper-shaded gas reading-lamp which to his knowledge hung over the heavy writing-table that occupied the middle of the elder Mustey's private room.

"God bless my soul, so it is!"

The speaker, with a tallowy change in his complexion,

stepped backwards from the doorstep to the pavement, conveyed himself in the same crab-like fashion to the centre of the quadrangle of ancient buildings constituting the Inn, and so stood, staring up at the window with the yellow-green flare behind the dusty brown wire-blinds, and tapping his latchkey on his chin as he had tapped it on the door-knob. Then he rejoined the other to say, with rather a perturbed and dubious air:

"If your business could wait half-an-hour or so, and you —being a stranger, as I take it ?—and new to the sights of London—were to indulge in a little walk along Holborn—say as far as Bloomsbury Street—and drop in at the British Museum, and have a look at the Elgin Marbles or the Assyrian Bulls,—or the—the Mummies in the Egyptian Department,—and then come back again,—you might stand a better chance of getting the bell answered." The speaker added, meeting a look of decided obstinacy, quite in keeping with the pouting, deeply-cut lips and the square chin with a cleft in it: "Unless you can suggest a better idea, you know. . . ."

"My idea is to stop here and ring until the bell *is* answered. But I am obliged to you all the same!" said the young man.

"You've waited long enough, you think ?" hesitated Messrs. Wotherspoon and Cadderby's head-clerk.

The answer came with a flash of strong white teeth in the fresh-coloured countenance that was dusted with dark brown freckles.

"Just twenty-three years," said the shaggy-haired young man.

"Lord bless me!" said Mr. Chown, "you must have begun waiting in your cradle! But time flies and business presses, and——"

"My view exactly!" returned the freckled young man, as the head-clerk inserted his latchkey into the heavy door

and it swung slowly backwards, revealing a bare and gloomy hall wainscoted with grimy oak and hung with mildewed flock-paper. "*Donnerwetter!* how you smell here!" he commented, having taken in a chestful of the medium that served the inhabitants of the Inn buildings for air. "But I suppose you're used to it!"

"Comparing our atmosphere with that of other London offices, I should be inclined to call us rather fresh than otherwise," said Mr. Chown, who had dropped his latchkey and was groping for it on the dirty floor by the oblong of daylight admitted by the open hall-door. "But I suppose —as some of the gentlemen who rent chambers here are still away on their vacations—the place might seem—to a stranger from the country—a trifle close."

"Stuffy!" corrected the young man, whose expression of disgust was highly uncomplimentary. "Drainy, blackbeetly, mousey, dusty, cellary. With a tinge of escaped gas and a something else that I——" He sniffed and said, puckering a sagacious nose: "Why, it's gunpowder! The place is chock-full of the fumes of burnt gunpowder. . . . Here! Hallo! What the devil are you trying to do? What do you mean?"

For the other, who had risen to his feet with a reversion to the sallow change of countenance previously observed in him, had caught him by the arm, as his eager foot had touched a dilapidated mat that lay as a snare for the unwary at the foot of the uncarpeted staircase, and with unexpected strength and quickness had swung him to the hall-door, and was endeavouring to push him over the threshold.

"I mean——" Mr. Chown was of middle age and evidently quite unused to wrestling: and as he strove with the shaggy young man upon the threshold of the dingy hall, it was evident that he would very soon give in. "I mean . . ." he panted, ". . . that you . . . can't you be sensible?"

"I should be a fool if I couldn't see that you're hiding something. Let go!" said the red-haired young man, not at all malevolently, "or I shall have to hurt you! I'm going upstairs, and you can't stop me! What harm do you think I am going to do to the white-haired old man who's lying fast asleep across his table? I shan't go in without knocking, if that's what you're thinking of! And what harm do you suppose he's going to do to me?"

A sullen bang answered, for Mr. Chown had reached out a wary hand behind his own respectable back, and grabbed at the dim brass knob and slammed the heavy door upon himself and his antagonist. There were circles round his eyes, and he puffed and panted heavily.

"You young—*puff*—idiot!" he gasped. "I'm not—*whoof!*—considering you—for—a—*whuff!*—moment. It's him,"—he pulled out a coloured handkerchief and mopped his face—"him that I've known since I was first articled, and had many a kindly word from, and many a liberal present. And now that this has happened—I may say I've seen it coming, and many a night I've stayed here—knowing him busy over his accounts above, and many a time I've been on the point of going up and knocking and offering a word of sympathy. But—it wasn't to be done! . . . You could never take a liberty with him, alive—and no one shall if I can stop 'em—now that he isn't!"

"Now that he—why, man!—you don't mean to say——"

They confronted each other on the doorstep, and the shaggy, obstinate young man had now flushed to ripe tomato-colour as he stammered:

"You don't mean he's dead? It isn't possible!"

"I say nothing and I mean nothing. There's no third party present," asserted Mr. Chown, with professional caution, "to testify to what I said or didn't say. But his son has to be looked for, and brought here if they can find

him—and if Mr. William can't be found—and without prejudice I think that's more than likely!—someone *he* knew and trusted must be the first to go into that room. His housekeeper I've heard is a good creature. He's often dropped a word in praise of her to me, I know. . . . We'll telegraph—I know his address! Number Three——"

The young man interrupted: "Addington Square, Camberwell."

"Send her a wire! I'll pay!" Mr. Chown plucked a shilling from his waistcoat pocket and agitatedly pressed it on the stranger. "There's a telegraph office at Snow Hill!"

"Where is Snow Hill? I'm a stranger in London. As it happens I came from Schwärz-Brettingen—it's a University town in North Germany—to keep a business appointment with Messrs. Mustey and Son." The shaggy-haired young man pointed to those first-floor windows, adding: "The elder gentleman is chief trustee of my mother's fortune—his son, who you say's missing, is the other—that is, he has been since the death of a great-uncle of mine. . . . For I didn't come of age, according to my mother's settlement, until my twenty-third birthday. And as it happens, I'm twenty-three to-day!"

"I see! He was to have paid the money over! . . . Good Lord! Good Lord!" groaned the head-clerk, "what a world it is!—what a world it is!"

"And all this while we're swopping talk, the old fellow upstairs may be dying for help that we could give him!" snarled the younger man, and caught the head-clerk by the shoulder in a grip that struck him as unpleasantly powerful. "Look here!—where is your key?"

"Just inside in the hall there. . . . I'd dropped it, don't you remember—I was looking for it when you—when you—said you smelt gunpowder," explained the attorney's clerk, "and then it all rushed on me."

"You did on me!—and I thought you'd gone crazy. Look here——" the other began.

"To be at all effective I had to take you suddenly," said Mr. Chown, adding, with a mild gleam of pride, "and you must add—I was effective! And if you've got it into your head that there's life in the poor old man yet—put it out again! For he shot himself last night just on the stroke of nine—and I could take my oath of it! I heard what must have been the—the noise—as I passed out at the gate, and the porter he said to me: "A gas explosion somewhere in the neighbourhood, Mr. Chown, or else it was a thunderclap." And I thought it might have been thunder—for the weather observations in the newspapers had mentioned storms as prevailing in South and South-Eastern England—and the winds have been blowing from south and south-east. And my wife has headaches when electricity's in the atmosphere—and she has been bad three days past."

"But let's do something—not stand here with our hands in our pockets!" urged the red-haired young man with eagerness. "I'm a surgeon—not diplomaed, worse luck! but enough of a one to give aid in such a case as you've hinted at."

"My key's inside the house—as I've told you!" retorted Mr. Chown, "and unless we were to break down the door—which would bring the police upon us before they're wanted—or one of us could climb like a cat—so as to look in at that window and make certain——"

"*Donnerwetter!* Good idea!" said the shaggy young man, in whose conversation mingled interjectional scraps and snatches of a language not comprehended by Mr. Chown, but dimly conjectured to be German. In the same instant he had pulled off his frieze overcoat, revealing the unsuspected fact that he wore no jacket under it—had thrown it upon the area-railings close to the row of bells that resembled organ-stops, and mounted upon it, shirt-

sleeved, vigorous, ready and purposeful. An iron torch-extinguisher, a rusted relic of the days when respectable citizens went forth o' nights attended by linkmen—jutted from the wall immediately above his head. He made a long arm and grasped it—and to the dazzled observation of the head-clerk appeared to walk up the wall like a house-fly. But in reality he had wedged a toe in an ornamental border of sooty masonry of the brick-in-and-brick-out description, that outlined the doors and windows of the Inn buildings; and with a degree of skill and suppleness that testified to no small degree of practice, hoisted himself up. Directly afterwards he was observed to be in the act of getting over the sooty balustrading that edged a narrow ledge of stone running before those first-floor windows, and the head-clerk, holding his breath, saw him stoop and peer in over a wire blind.

Directly afterwards, as it seemed, he withdrew his head and looked down into Mr. Chown's pale face, and his own had lost its ruddy colour. Then, coming down as he had gone up, much to the astonishment and curiosity of Mr. Chown's two juniors and several legal-looking personages who had arrived upon the scene and gathered in quite a little crowd upon the cobblestones—he said in a low tone, as he drew the former gentleman apart:

"You were right. Whether it was done last night or more recently, it has been done, and thoroughly. With a new-looking revolver. He has it in his hand!"

"Poor old gentleman, I could swear that what he did he has been driven to do, through despair and debt and misery. . . . 'Mr. William will be my ruin, Chown!' he said to me only three days ago. And he has been his ruin, sir!" said Mr. Chown, blowing his nose with a flourish, and wiping his eyes furtively. "His ruin, Mr. William has been. . . . You may depend upon that!"

Said the young man from North Germany, pulling on his

shabby overcoat: "The table is covered with papers, and the safe facing the window is open. . . . Do you think——"

"I don't think—I know! He had a kind of swooning fit a week back, when the crash came, and a Receiving Order in Bankruptcy was made against him on the petition of his creditors. He was a long time coming round—and I stayed by him while the caretaker went to fetch a hackney-cab—for I'd been called, being a sort of favourite with him, and having known him for years. He'd been robbed and plundered then, because he groaned it out to me; and he pointed to that safe, and told me that it had been gutted by means of false keys—the Bramah he always wore on his watch-riband having been got at and copied. 'All the cash I had left in the world, Chown, besides seven thousand in Trust Securities! . . . It's my punishment for having been near and hard to others that I might be generous to *him!*' Are you going?"

The shaggy young man, crimson to the lining-edge of the old gray wideawake he had pulled over his brows after buttoning his overcoat, made an incoherent sound in his throat, and swung abruptly round upon his heel. The reflection had occurred to him: "He'd have been generous to *me* if he'd waited to have seen me—and blown out my brains before scattering his own,—*pfui!*—over that table and all the papers!" But he did not voice it aloud.

"Leave me your address," said the kindly-hearted Mr. Chown, "and—it's not business to say you may trust me!—but I'll undertake to bring your name before the Official Receiver—for you're one of the principal creditors—provided what you've told me can be proved. . . ."

"I suppose you know that—dead man's writing when you see it?" said the other, swinging round on Mr. Chown with no very pleasant look.

"As well as I know my own!" retorted Mr. Chown, nodding back.

"If so—and not because I admit you've any right!—but because I choose to show it you—you may read this!" went on the late Mr. Mustey's chief creditor, pulling a rather worn and crumpled oblong envelope out of his pocket and exhibiting the direction written on it in a flowing, old-fashioned, legal hand.

"'P. C. Breagh, Esq., care of Frau Busch, Jaeger Strasse, Schwärz-Brettingen, N. Germany.' . . . But I really shouldn't have dreamed——" began Mr. Chown.

"Read it!" said the owner of the letter, savagely thrusting it upon him, and the head-clerk with another protest, nipped in mid-utterance by another order to read it, mastered the contents.

The writer acknowledged the receipt of Mr. P. C. Breagh's letter, and begged to remind him that he was quite well acquainted with the terms of his late mother's Marriage Settlement. He congratulated his young friend on having so nearly attained the age of discretion decided under the provisions of the instrument referred to; and appointed the hour of nine o'clock upon the morning of the 3rd of January, to discharge his trust and hand over the cash, deposit-notes, and securities. . . .

"While all the time he knew—none better, except his precious partner!—that I should leave his office as poor as I'd come there. It would have been decent," snarled Patrick Carolan Breagh, "to have owned the truth."

"And accused his own son!—And now I look at the date of this it was written on the day before that affair of the false Bramah. . . . Do him justice, Mr. Breagh! . . . Try to think he meant fair by you. Wherever he's gone . . ." Mr. Chown looked vaguely up at the monochromatic sky—now darkening as though it meant to rain in earnest—and then down at the cobble-stones, "he'll be no worse for that, and you'll be the better here, I dare to say! You'll give me your address, sir? I don't know

but that as you were the first to discover the body, you'll be expected to give evidence before the Coroner."

"Damn the Coroner!" said P. C. Breagh. "Whether he wants it or not I haven't an address to give. I paid my bill at a thundering beastly cheap hotel in the Euston Road by handing over my trunks of clothes, and books and instruments to the landlord. . . . He promised to keep them for three weeks—to give me a chance to redeem them!—and he grunted when I said I'd be back with money enough to buy his bug-ridden lodging-house before two days were over his head. And I pawned my coat for dinner yesterday and a coffee-house bed last night. . . . That's why you saw shirt-sleeves when I pulled off this old wrap-rascal. . . . But I'll look in here again to-morrow—unless I—change my mind!"

He had passed under the archway and was gone before Mr. Chown had recovered himself sufficiently to call after him. To follow would have been no use. So the head-clerk went sorrowfully back to write and despatch those urgent telegraphic messages.

And Carolan, shouldering through the double torrent of pedestrian humanity rolling east and west along the worn pavements of Holborn, plunged through the roaring traffic of the cobble-stoned roadway, and with his chin well down upon his chest, and his hands rammed deep into his pockets, turned down Fetter Lane, knowing that he, who had been heir to a goodly sum in thousands, was by this sudden turn of Fortune's wheel, a beggar.

V.

As a dog will skulk dejectedly from the spot where a bone previously buried has failed to reward the snuffing nose and the digging paw, so P. C. Breagh, on the long-expected

twenty-third birthday that was to have made him master of dead Milly's fortune, slouched down Fetter Lane, humming and vibrant with the vicinity of great printing-works, and redolent of glue and treacle, tar, printers' ink, engine-oil, and size.

A double stream of carts and trucks, heavily-laden with five-mile rollers of yellow-white paper for the revolving vertical type-cylinders of the Applegarth steam printing-machine—then in its heyday—bales of tow, formes of type and piles of wood-blocks, choked the narrow thoroughfare. The smells from the cheaper eating-houses—where sausages frizzled in metal trays, and tea and coffee steamed in huge tapped boilers, and piles of doubtful-looking eggs, and curly rashers of streaky bacon were to be had by people with money to pay for breakfast—even the sight of compositors in clean shirt-sleeves and machine-men steeped in ink and oil to the eyebrows eating snacks of bread and cheese and saveloy, and drinking porter out of pewter on the doorsteps of great buildings roaring with machinery—sickened P. C. Breagh with vain desire.

His world was all in ruins about him. He was conscious of a painful sense of stricture in the throat, and a tight pain as though a knotted rope were bound about his temples. His hand did not shake, though, when he thrust it out under his eyes and looked at it curiously. But he shouldered his way so clumsily along the narrow, crowded sidewalk that he found himself every now and then in collision with some more or less incensed pedestrian, such as the printer's devil, who cried, "Now then, Snobby, where are yer a-comin' to?" or the stout red-faced matron in black, displaying a row of bootlaces and a paper of small-tooth combs for sale—who emerged from the swing-doors of a public-house as P. C. Breagh charged past them, and wanted to know whether he called himself a young man or a mad bull? A well-dressed, elderly gentleman, carrying a calf-skin bag

and a gold-mounted umbrella, confounded him for a bungling, blundering, blackguardly! . . . and was left revelling in alliteratives as the provoker of his wrath swung out of the Lane and found himself upon the reported Tom Tiddler's ground of Fleet Street. And then a curious swirling giddiness overtook him, and he dropped down upon some stone steps under the Gothic doorway of a church with a lofty tower, and sat there with hunched shoulders and drooped head, staring dully at the pavement between his muddy boots.

He was conscious of a dull resentment at his lot, but no base hatred of that old man with the shattered skull, lying prone amongst the bloody litter of his office-table, mingled with it. All his life, since that sixth birthday when he had learned the meaning of Death, and the potential value of Money, the attainment of his twenty-third year had been the goal towards which he had striven; and every third of January crossed off the almanac "*brings me nearer,*" he had said to himself, "*to the money that will be mine to spend as I shall choose!*"

And now . . . without a profession—for he had failed to obtain his degrees in Medicine and Surgery—without funds, for a reason that did him no dishonour—without books or belongings of any kind except the clothes upon his back; without hope—for who can be hopeful on an empty and craving stomach?—without work to occupy those strong young hands and the sound, capable brain behind those gray, amber-flecked eyes, the unlucky young man who had been reared on expectations sat under St. Dunstan's Tower; and heard St. Dunstan's clock and St. Paul's, and all the other City churches answer the boom of Big Ben of Westminster, solemnly striking the hour of ten.

His prospects had been blighted and ruined, his young hopes lay dead: he felt bruised and battered by the experiences and discoveries of that birthday morning, as though the pair of wooden clock-giants that some forty

years back had figured amongst the City sights from their vantage in the ancient steeple of St. Dunstan's, had beaten out the hour with their mallets on his head.

His stepmother had always resented the monetary independence of her husband's son by Milly Fermeroy. Well! she and her vulgarities, her resentments and jealousies, had long been laid to rest, poor soul!

In that bloody June of the Mutiny of '57 she and her two youngest children had perished at Cawnpore. A fortnight later Major Breagh, previously wounded in the head by a shell-splinter in the defence of the entrenchments, was bayoneted by a Sepoy infantryman during a desperate sortie.

Carolan had remained as a boarder at the Preparatory School of the Marist Fathers at Rockhampton, where he had previously been placed, thanks to the "interference," as Mrs. Breagh had phrased it, of the Regimental Chaplain, Father Haygarty. And, owing to the same influence, Monica, Carolan's junior by two years, had—after the double stroke of Fate that left the children orphaned—been sent to the Sisters of the Annunciation in London, the charges of her support and education being defrayed out of the interest of Carolan's seven thousand, and the compassionate allowance of twenty-five pounds granted her by Government as the orphan daughter of an officer killed in war.

VI.

To-day, as P. C. Breagh sat paupered on the doorstep of St. Dunstan's, he realised that from childhood to this hour, dead Milly's money had been his bane.

"When I was quite a little shaver I expected to be knocked under to, and given the best of everything, because I was going to be rich one day. . . . I knew my money kept my stepmother from grumbling and nagging at me. And—my

first thrashing at Rockhampton was because I'd bragged about it to a bigger boy. He said when he let me get up—that I should be obliged to him one day, if I wasn't at the moment! And my first fight—no, my second—because the first was over my Irish brogue!—my second fight came off because I'd forgotten my lesson, and talked about being able to drive four-in-hand, and live up to a Commission in the Household Cavalry when I should come of age. . . . Silly young idiot! And when I was old enough for a public school—and passed—I wonder, with my luck, how I managed to pass?—into Bradenbury College—I had mills, no end! with the fellows there, because I couldn't keep mum about my expectations." . . .

He leaned his dusty elbows on his knees and went on thinking, as a regular procession of legs of all sexes, ages, and colours went past, and the muddy river of Fleet Street traffic roared over the cobble-stones, boiled in swirling eddies where it received the stream flowing down Chancery Lane, and choked and gurgled in and out of the squat archways of Temple Bar.

"I'd talked of Oxford as a preliminary to Sandhurst and a Cavalry Commission—and I went in for an Exhibition Entrance—but my classics queered me for the University. Knock Number One! The Head put it on the Italianate Latin I'd learned from the Marist Fathers—and why old Virgil, and Ovid, Horace, Cæsar, and Livy, and the rest of 'em, should be supposed to have pronounced their language with a British accent I've never been able to understand! . . . When I went up for the Woolwich Open Competitive—having altered my views about the Household Cavalry!—my plane trigonometry dished me for the Royal Horse Artillery. . . . Knock Number Two! So I told myself that it wasn't as easy getting into a Queen's uniform as it was in my father's time. . . . You were given the Commission—or you bought it—and if you could drill, and march, and fight, no more was asked of you. . . . And

I tried for the Royal Engineering College of India—and failed in dynamics—and had a shot for the I.C.S.—and missed again! Oh, damn! And do I owe every one of the whole string of failures to the belief that money makes up for everything and buys anything? I'm half beginning to believe I do! Even the kindness I have had from people I'd no claim on—and who is there alive I *have* a claim on? Have I been cad enough—ape enough—worm enough—to put it down to—— Grrh!—how I loathe myself!"

He covered his reddened face with his hands and shuddered. It is horrible to have to go on living inside a fellow you have begun to hate.

"Even Father Haygarty's untiring kindness, his interest in all I did and thought and hoped for. . . . Weren't there times when I suspected that my—in some degree representing property—accounted for—oh, Lord! And when he was dying and his housekeeper sent for me—for he'd given up being an Army Chaplain and got a little living in Gloucestershire—did I realise even then what a friend and father I was losing? I hope to God I did, but I'm hardly sure of myself!"

He stubbed with the toe of his muddy boot the jutting corner of a paving-stone, and scowled at the image of himself that was growing more and more distinct. He had always thought P. C. Breagh rather a fine young fellow. Now he knew him for what he had always been.

"When Father Haygarty was gone—it wasn't long before Mustey and Son began to send explanations and apologies, instead of the whole of the quarter's interest-money. There had been a drop in securities of this kind and the other, and Consols were down—and at first I was as pleased as a prize poodle at being made excuses to. . . . But the fact remained that where I'd been getting two hundred and forty, I was only getting one hundred and seventy-three. . . . And that—if I really meant to go in for

my Degree in Surgery and Medicine, for I'd made up my mind to be a medical swell—I had—if Monica was to go on staying with the Sisters!—I'd got to give up the idea of Edinburgh, or the London University, and matriculate somewhere abroad. So I went to Schwärz-Brettingen, and shared rooms with another English chap. . . . It was admitted I had solid abilities—the Professors whose lectures I attended thought well of me. And I failed!—Failed for the fourth time! Have I the accursed money to thank for that last blow?"

He perspired as though he had been running, and, indeed, nothing takes it out of you like a sprint over the course of the past with your conscience as pacer.

"I'd thought myself rather a fine fellow when, with my student-card in my pocket and my *Anmeldungsbuch* in my hand, I called—in company with a squad of other candidates—on the Rector Magnificus. We had a punch afterwards, and a drive and coffee at the Plesse—and made a night of it at Fritz's. I woke with a first-class student's headache in the morning, and a hazy recollection that I'd told one or two of the British colony—in confidence—and several Germans—about the money I was coming into by-and-by. . . ."

He ground his teeth and squeezed his eyelids together, trying to shut out the picture of P. C. Breagh in the character of a howling cad.

"But if I bragged—and I did brag!—I worked. . . . The Marist Fathers had grounded me in French and German in spite of myself, and my pride had been nicely stung up by that failure for Sandhurst and the others. . . . Men told me what I'd got to grind at, and I ground; filling piles of lecture-pads with notes on all sorts of subjects. Anatomy, physiology, physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology. . . . My brain was a salad of 'em—but I passed the *Abiturienten-Examen* at a classical gymnasium with a better certificate than a lot of other Freshmen—thanks to the Marist Fathers.

who'd pounded Latin and Greek into me!—and then—after two years of walking hospitals, attending demonstrations and lectures, and doing laboratory-work—varied by beers and *schläger*—and more beers and more *schläger!*—and perhaps I took to sword-play all the more kindly because of the soldier-blood in me!—came the first regular examination. And I don't forget that third of November—not while I'm breathing!"

Donnerwetter! P. C. Breagh could see the cocked-hatted and scarlet-gowned University beadle ushering a pale young man, with saucers round his eyes, into the awful presence of the Dean and Examiners in the Faculties of Surgery and Medicine. . . .

The neophyte—arrayed in the swallow-tail coat, low-cut vest, black cloth inexpressibles, white cravat, and kid gloves inseparable from an English dinner-party, or the ordeal of examination at a German University, found his inquisitors also in formal full dress, seated in a semicircle facing the door, and looking singularly cheerful.

A solitary chair marked the middle of the chord of the arc formed by the chairs of the examiners. Upon this stool of judgment—after bowing and shaking hands all round, and being bowed to and shaken—the victim had been invited to seat himself. The Dean opened the ball with the Early Theorists. And he had seemed quite to cotton to P. C. Breagh's ideas on the subject of Egyptian Sacerdotal Colleges, the preparation of Soma in the Vedas, the therapeutical formulas of Zoroaster, Chinese sympathetic medicine—the dietetic method of Hippocrates—who invented barley-water!—the observations of Diocles and Chrysippus and the criticisms of Galen. At the expiration of half an hour, when the Hofrath delivered him over to the next examiner, P. C. Breagh had felt that if the others were no worse than the Dean, all might yet be well.

Professor Barselius, who followed the Dean, and was

reported to be a terror, when correctly replied to upon an interrogation as to the chemical composition of the fatty acids, vouchsafed a grunt of approbation.

Professor Troppenritt, who succeeded Barselius, was a person with a reputation for amiability, and a mobility of mental constitution which enabled him to flit like the butterfly or leap like the grasshopper from subject to subject, harking back to Number One, perhaps, when you felt quite sure he had done with it for good. But on that fateful third of November a tricksy demon seemed to possess Troppenritt. He no longer flitted like the butterfly, or hopped like the grasshopper—he sported with the seven great departments of Structural Anatomy, Physiology, Pathological Anatomy, General Pathology, Ophthalmology, Medicine, Hygiene and Midwifery—as a fountain might toss up glass balls, or a conjurer juggle with daggers. . . . His victim after a while found himself breathlessly watching the huge knobby rampart of forehead, behind which the Professor's intentions were hiding, in the vain hope that the next question might be foreshadowed on its shining surface. A hope destined never to be fulfilled. . . .

The fact remains that P. C. Breagh, after some really creditable answers, was beginning to recover the use of his mental faculties, when the Dean—prompted by the candidate's evil genius—suggested a little pause for cake and wine. It was awful to see how Hofrath and Professors—there were three of them besides the conjurer Troppenritt—enjoyed themselves at this sacrificial banquet, which had been arranged upon a little table in a corner, waiting the five-minute interval. And P. C. Breagh rejected cake, which was of the gingerbread variety, garnished with blanched almonds and sugar-plums. But the single glass of Rüdesheimer he accepted might have been the Brobdingnagian silver-mounted horn that hung within a garland of frequently-renewed laurel leaves upon the walls of a famous students' beer-hall—or have been filled with raw

spirits above proof,—the contents mounted so unerringly to his head, and wreaked such havoc therein.

The three remaining Professors were almost tender with the sufferer, but what Troppenritt had begun, the wine had completed. The *nicht wahr's* had been succeeding one another at marked intervals,—like distress-signals or funereal minute-guns, when the traditional three hours expired.

P. C. Breagh—removed to cold storage in the anteroom—was detained but five minutes longer. . . . His nervous shiverings had reached a crescendo, when the beadle opened the door. . . . And the Dean, stepping forward, in staccato accents delivered himself:

"Candidate, from the quality of the dissertations in writing previously submitted, we, the Faculty of Surgery and Medicine of the University of Schwärz-Brettingen—would a more satisfaction-imparting result have anticipated as the result of the just-concluded oral examination undergone by you. . . . But although lacking in *Gedächtniss*—has been manifested on your part, a so-remarkable degree of *Einbildung* and *Begriff* that the Faculty of-hesitation-none-whatever have in the following-advice-to-you-imparting;—Yourself another semester give, or better still, another twelvemonth! and try again, young man!—try again!"

Not bad advice, if the young man had chosen to follow it. But January drew near, and the inheritor-expectant of seven thousand pounds scorned to toil and moil over intellectual ground already traversed. He had tried for honours, and he had failed, thanks to the hypnotising methods of the too-agile Troppenritt.

So P. C. Breagh spent the money that would have kept him, with economy, for six months, in giving a farewell banquet to his friends, called—in his best attire, with kid gloves and a buttonhole bouquet—on his favourite lec-

turers; left cards on the wives of those who possessed them; paid his landlady—who had faithfully laboured to convert his formal, class-room German into a malleable, useful tongue,—kissed her round cheek—tipped the civil servant-maid five dollars,—and turned his back for ever on Schwärz-Brettingen, its *Aula, Collegien-Haus, Theatrum Anatomicum,* Botanical Garden, Library and *Carcer*—(a correctional edifice the interior accommodations of which were only known to him by hearsay),—its restaurants, beer-saloons, coffee-gardens, and fencing-halls; its chilly wood-stoves, its glowing enthusiasms; its pleasant companionships, its passing flirtations with *schoppen*-bearing Hebes, and nymphs of the coffee-garden, restaurant, or ninepin-alley. One cannot say its love-affairs, because in the esteem of P. C. Breagh—though Passion might bloom red by the wayside at every mile of a man's journey—Love was a rare blossom found once in a lifetime, too often never found at all.

P. C. Breagh's idea of Love was that it should be spelt with a capital, and spoken of in whispers. Nor, let us hint, was the ideal Woman at whose feet, he promised himself, he would one day pour forth all the gold and jewels of his heart and intellect, a being to be lightly trifled with.

To commence with, she would have to be six feet high or thereabouts. . . . Blue-eyed, blonde-haired, of classical features, cream-and-rose complexion, powerful intellect and thews matching, the ideal woman of P. C. Breagh must have weighed about fourteen stone. He imagined her a kind of Britomart-Krimhilde-Brünhilde-Isolde—with a dash of Mary Queen of Scots, Kingsley's Hypatia, and a spice of Edith Dombey and the beautiful shrewish Roman Princess out of "The Cloister and the Hearth"—though these heroines were jetty-locked, and for this reason fell short of P. C. Breagh's ideal of female loveliness. Fair and colossal,

he had seen her over and over again,—though a little too roseate and pulpy in texture to come up to his ideal—in the vast canvases of Kaulbach and in the overwhelming frescoes of the Bavarian Spiess. But he had never yet encountered her in the flesh. One day they would meet—and she would be scornful of the young obscure, unknown man who looked at her—she felt it from the first, and that made her quite furious!—with the eye of a consciously superior being—a master *in posse*.

All the masculine world would bow down before the intellect combined with the beauty—of Britomart-Krimhilde-Brünhilde-Isolde—and so on, for he amalgamated new heroines with the others, in the course of his reading. But one man lived who would not bow down. She would taunt him with this stiff-necked pride of his, in the course of an interview on the terrace of a castle, whose moat he had swum and whose guarded ramparts he had scaled in order to be discovered, scorning her, and communing with the moon. And he would quell her tempestuous wrath, and silence her reproaches, by telling her that it was for her to pay homage and court smiles. Then she would summon her vassals and lovers, and half a dozen of them would set upon P. C. Breagh, who would strangle one with his naked hands, run another through with his own sword—and provide materials, broadly speaking,—for half a dozen first-class funerals—before he leapt into the moat, carrying a rose that she had dropped, between his teeth—and "*gained the distant bank in safety,*" or "*dripping and bloody, emerged from the dark water, gripped an iron chain, eaten with the rust of centuries, and, painfully scaling the frowning masonry, disappeared into the . . .*" *etc.*

Absurd, if you will, and bombastic and impossibly high-flown. Yet such boyish dreams keep the soul clean and the body from grosser stain. Walking with your head erect you may stub your toe, and come a cropper on the

stones occasionally. But you pick yourself up again and proceed more warily—none the less rejoicing, seeing the splendour of the sunset, or braving the blaze of noonday, or drinking in the delicate spring-like hues of dawn. . . .

One does not know how long P. C. Breagh might have remained upon the steps of St. Dunstan's, had not the hour of twelve sounded from the new clock—a youngster barely forty years old—that had replaced the gong-hammering wooden giants, now on view outside the Marquis of Hertford's villa in Regent's Park. A constable civilly asked him to move on. He got up, heavily, and mechanically felt for the watch that was in keeping of the landlord of the fourth-rate hostelry in the Euston Road. And it occurred to him—as a pin-prick amongst innumerable stiletto strokes—that the watch alone, being a heavy silver one attached to a slender gold snake-chain once the property of dead Milly—would have satisfied the man's claim, which, exorbitant as it was, for the accommodation afforded, was considerably under three pounds. You are to understand that P. C. Breagh had been so certain of returning in a few hours, heavy with ready money, that he had treated the landlord's detention of his luggage as a joke.

The present situation was no joke. But Youth preserves above all the property of rising unbruised and elastic from a tumble, and of healing readily when it has sustained mental or physical wounds!

The blood in the veins of P. C. Breagh was mingled with the finer strain that came from the breed of Fermeroy. He had no idea of finding a craven's refuge in suicide. The single shilling remaining to him might purchase sufficient strychnine for a painful, unheroic exit, but P. C. Breagh was not disposed to invest his remaining capital in that unpleasant alkaloid. And neither did it occur to him then, to test the depth and drowning-capacity of the muddy liquid

running under any one of London's bridges, from Westminster to the Tower. For by the contradictory law of Nature, reversing scientific fact, a helpless weight that hung about his strong young neck kept his moral head above the turbid waters of Despondency.

He was not alone in the world. There was Monica. With the remembrance of that frail link, binding him to the rest of humanity, awakened in him the desire to see her. He turned his face Westward and stepped into the moving throng.

VII.

The Great Class fermented in irrepressible excitement. Subsequently to the arrival of a foreign mail, Juliette Bayard had been summoned by an attendant lay-sister to the presence of Mère M. Catherine-Rose.

She had remained nearly half an hour in the Parlour of Cold Feet—so called in recognition of the fact that the apartment contained no fireplace, and that even in the hottest weather, cool draughts played hide-and-seek across the polished parquet from circular brazen gratings inserted in the wainscot, which ancient legend connected with the presence of a French *calorifère*.

When the door opened and Juliette emerged, somewhere about the middle of the noon recreation, an advance-patrol in the shape of a pupil of the Little Class, by name Laura Foljambe—happened to be buttoning a shoe-strap at the end of the corridor. The apoplectic attitude inseparable from this particular employment would have rendered observation impossible—in the case of an adult. But Laura, under the cover of a luxuriant head of yellow ringlets, unconfined by any comb or ribbon, observed, firstly, that Juliette had been crying, and secondly, that Mère M.

Catherine-Rose had tears in her own eyes. More, she had called Juliette back, embraced her affectionately, and said: "We shall miss you, my dear!" "You will be brave, I know!" and "Remember to write!" Packed with news, Laura rushed into the Lesser Hall, where the seniors were gathered round the stove, the raw chill of the January weather rendering the garden a place of penitence, and emptied her budget of intelligence upon the spot.

Juliette must be going away! The forty girls of the Great Class had unanimously arrived at this conclusion when Juliette herself arrived upon the scene. It needed but a glance to assure her of the treachery of Laura; it needed but a moment, and the spy, blubbering and protesting, was seized, shaken, and forced upon her knees. . . .

You are to understand that when Juliette Bayard was angry, she was so with a vengeance. Heroic by temperament, her wrath smacked of the superhuman. A demi-goddess enraged might have manifested as semi-divine a frenzy. Ordinary prose seemed too poor a vehicle to convey such indignation. You expected hexameters or Alexandrines. . . .

"That you listened I would stake my honour!—I would pledge my life!—I would put the hand in the fire! Mean! Base! Despicable! Ah, you look simple, little thing, but you are cunning as a mouse—fine as amber! No! I do not pinch, I would scorn it—you know that perfectly! Yes! I will permit you to go when you confess who set you on!"

Laura, unwilling to incur the resentment of forty grown-ups, undesirous of forfeiting the saccharine reward of treachery, boohooed in a whisper, for class-hour was approaching. The wrathful goddess towered over her, eyed with blue lightning, crowned with dusky clouds of thunder, flushed like the sunset that comes after the day of storm.

Had Arthur Hughes or Fred Walker been privileged to peep—one painter at least would have armed her uplifted hand with a bulrush-spear, helmeted her with a curled water-lily leaf, and given the smiling world Titania in the character of Pallas Athené, or Queen Mab as an Amazon. And Juliette would never have pardoned the painter. For—despite the testimony of her tale of inches—she would have it that she was tall, even above the average height of woman.

"I shall not be beautiful, no! but I shall be commanding!" she had assured those favoured girls on whom she deigned to bestow her imperial confidence. This select number in turn possessing a circle of confidantes, the drop of a secret meant a series of widening rings, extending to the circle of the day scholars, reaching the Orphanage by-and-by, and trickling at length into the basement, where the Poor School assembled on Wednesdays and Fridays, to gather up the crumbs of knowledge that fell from the tables of the daughters of the great and rich.

You may imagine the scene in Lesser Hall upon this chilly day in January. Excitement was much more warming than crowding round the smoky stoves. Of the semi-circle of great girls in their black school-dresses, enlivened only by the red or white class-rosettes, or the pale blue ribands of the Children of Mary, all the heads, adorned with every shade of feminine tresses,—all the eyes of all colours, set in faces plain or pretty—were turned towards the tragic figure of Juliette.

Once kindled, such violet fires of wrath blazed in those implacable eyes, one would have supposed nothing could ever quench them. But when she was sorrowful, they were bottomless lakes of misery. Despair lay drowned and wan amidst the long black sedges drooping at their borders. Under the dark, hollowed precipices that shadowed them it seemed as though no sun could ever shine. But when

the laugh was born, it leaped to the surface with a quiver that caught the light and flashed it back pure sapphire or loveliest Persian turquoise. No face ever framed of earthly clay had more of the mirth of Heaven in it, then. Her long upper-lip, the elastic, mobile feature that could draw out to so portentous a length, would be haunted by flying smiles, and the deep-cut corners of her short scarlet under-lip would quiver. To inventorise the beauties of a young lady and omit the nose would suggest cause for reticence on the writer's part. Juliette's nose was not of Greek or Roman type, but neither was it snubbed or tip-tilted. It had a rounded end, and deep, curved, passionate nostrils. It pertained to no known order of nasal architecture. It was Juliette's nose, and could never have belonged to anybody else.

If you would more of her,—and after the first encounter you either sought or shunned—loved or loathed—as she would have had you do who was in all things sincere and candid, you are to understand that her cloud of dusky hair framed a small oval face that made no show of carnation or vaunt of rose. Her clear fine skin was almost always pale. She would have laughed you to scorn had you likened those colourless cheeks of hers to lilies. She prided herself upon a frame of mind eminently commonplace, antipodean to the romantic. "I am sensible, me!" you often heard her say.

In form—though as you know she believed herself to be a giantess—she was small and slight, and not at all remarkable. A framework of slender bones, frugally covered with tender, healthful flesh. Her shoulders sloped so much that in her loose-bodied, full-sleeved, black merino school uniform she seemed about to vanish. Her hips were narrow, without the voluptuous curves that belong to heroines. But a Divine jest had added to her little high-arched head a tiny pair of rosy shells for hearing, and the

palms and nails and finger-tips of her narrow hands,—and feet I have heard it said by some who loved her—were roseate also. The younger children liked to pretend that this was a judgment on Juliette for stealing strawberries in the early June season, but she only joined in that one raid on the Sisters' kitchen-garden "To be a good comrade!" . . . and as it happened, all the strawberries were slug-eaten. And where are there strawberries worth the stealing, unless it be in France?

For next to God and Our Lady, and her father, M. le Colonel, Juliette Bayard loved her country. Paradise was but an improvement on France, to hear her describe it to the little ones. Further, though she had a perfect taste in dress, when released from the School uniform; though an ordinary hat under her deft transforming fingers would become a miracle of exquisite millinery; her groups of flowers, and landscapes, in water-colour, her crayon dog's heads, were mercifully hidden from the drawing-master's eye. She sang out of tune, but in time; played correctly, but hated the piano; danced like an air-wafted tuft of dandelion-down or a gnat upon a summer evening,—and had a Heaven-born gift for housekeeping and cookery.

Of this last gift more anon. Meanwhile Laura writhed, or seemed to writhe, under the torrent of passionate reproaches, culminating in another shake, and a slap which might have damaged a kitten newly-born. Laura fell prone, moaning and gurgling. And Juliette, pierced by remorse at her own ruthlessness, sank, pale as ashes, beside the victim's corse.

"Darling Laura! sweetest Laura!—tell me I have not hurt you! Just Heaven! how could I strike you?—I, who am so strong! Indeed, I might have killed you! . . . Pray for me, my little angel! It will need a miracle to cure my temper, as Mother Veronica constantly says. Cannot you get up? Do try, to please me! Tell me

where you feel most injured ? Quick, or I know I shall be angry again ! . . . Show me the bruise ! Pouf ! that is a mere nothing ! I will kiss it and make it well, and you shall have the blue bead Rosary."

The mention of the blue beads palpably restored vitality. The sufferer was understood to intimate that a chocolate elephant would absolutely complete the cure.

"The elephant to-morrow when the Great Class return from the promenade. The Rosary before Benediction. Away with you !"

Laura scuttled. Juliette blew her a parting kiss, and said, with a comprehensive glance of scorn at the faces of her classmates:

"It was not she who deserved the—— I have not the expression ! . . . It is one of your English words that mean many things together . . . a kiss . . . a blow . . . the boat of a sailor who catches fishes and crabs. . . . I have seen such boats at Havre and Weymouth, and they are very pretty. . . . Ah ! Now I remember. You call them fishing-spanks !"

The Class shrieked. Juliette stood calmly while the tumult of laughter and exclamations raged about her. Her long upper-lip shut down upon its scarlet neighbour, her brows frowned a little; her slender arms, lost in their loose sleeves, hung straightly by her narrow sides. Millais would, seeing her, have painted a maiden martyr. Watts might have limned her as Persephone new-loosed from the dark embrace of Dis, her wooer, taking her first timid steps upon the glowing floor of Hell.

"When you have finished making so much noise—*peu importe*—but I have a piece of news to tell you. You are none of you inquisitive—that goes without saying !—or you would not have despatched that poor infant to play the spy outside the parlour door. Bridget-Mary and Alethea Bawne, I do not mean you—you are souls of honour—incapable of curiosity ! . . . Also, Monica Breagh,

c'est là son moindre défaut! But there are others—yet my friends—who are not so delicate,—and to these I address myself. You do not deserve to hear—and yet I cannot be unkind to you; I, who have such joy of the heart in the knowledge that I am to return to my dear father!—such grief—ah! but such grief of the soul in bidding *adieu* to the School!"

"Not for good?"

"You are going to leave the School?"

"Dear, darling Juliette, say you're only joking!"

"She is in earnest. Look at her upper lip!"

"*Vous moquez-vous du monde de parler ainsi!*"

Throbbed out a Spanish voice, husky and passionate:

"*Qué vergüenza! No, no, es imposibile!*"

"Sure, dear, you'd not be so cruel as to make game of us?"

She stood her ground, firm, but no longer frowning. Her heart swelled, her eyes were heavy with the promise of rain. Her slender arms went out as though she would have embraced them all.

"My dears, it is true! I go to Versailles to rejoin my father. He says to me also—I have his letter here!" . . .

Silence fell upon the turbulent crowd as she laid a slender hand on the place where her heart could be seen throbbing. The paper rustled, but she did not draw it forth.

"He says, in this—I am to be married . . . soon,—very quickly!"

A Babel of cries, ejaculations, and exclamations broke out about her. A girl's voice, more strident than the rest, shrieked:

"I hate your father! Beast!" and broke down in hysterical sobbing. Juliette replied, those about her hushed to hear; and in the oasis of silence her tender, silvery voice rose like a fountain springing from the heart of purity.

"My father is not what you say, but the Emperor's brave soldier and a noble gentleman. I am proud to obey when he commands! He has said to me that I am to be married, and does he not know what is best for me? Would he wish to bring unhappiness upon his Juliette?"

She was not so much loyal as Loyalty personified, standing there defending him; with her little hand keeping down her bursting heart of anguish, and salt lakes of unshed tears pent up behind her sorrowful sapphire eyes. . . . Her voice broke as she said "his Juliette," and one of the Bawnes, a stately, black-browed girl, answered, speaking in French:

"He would not if he is—what you have described him! . . . But—unless you knew of this before—it is so sudden. . . . It would seem to argue that M. le Colonel was thinking more—you will not be offended!—of the happiness of his future son-in-law than of his daughter's——"

"*Non, non, non!*" She made an emphatic gesture with her little hand, and shook her head so that a tear fell from her lashes on the bosom of her black school-dress, "Dear Lady Biddy—you are mistaken. For—comprehend you?—my happiness is in obeying that beloved father, always. For me, there is no greater joy. . . . And his letter bears date of the New Year—three days since—behold the postmark. It is the custom to give young people *étrennes* at that season—my father bestows on me a husband, and I am—content! See you well?"

It was faulty English, yet Juliette's "See you well?" haunted the music-loving ear.

And now even the reserved began to question, while the frankly curious waxed importunate concerning the date of Mademoiselle Bayard's impending departure, the name, rank and personal appearance of the mysterious husband-elect, the number and uniform of his regiment. For, of

course, he was certain to be an officer of cavalry, Dragoons, Lancers, or Cuirassiers. That he must be handsome went without saying; but were his eyes dark or light, and did he wear a moustache only, or sport the hirsute ornament in conjunction with an imperial? Beset from all quarters, Juliette was beginning to lose command of herself, when the hour of two struck from the great clock in the corridor.

The clang-clang of an iron bell succeeded, the double doors at the upper end of the Hall rolled backwards, uniting the Great and the Middle Classes in the religious exercise that opened afternoon School. The hymn sung, the brief litany chanted to an accompaniment played on the harmonium by a mistress in the purple habit and creamy veil of the choir Sisters, another nun approached Juliette and whispered in her ear.

She was to go to the dormitory and pack her trunk, which would presently be brought her by one of the lay-sisters. And this done, she was free to spend the half-hour previous to Benediction in the parlour with——

The name was lost in Juliette's embrace and kiss of gratitude. She was usually chary of caresses, perhaps she wished to hide her eyes.

They were fairly overflowing, poor eyes! when their owner gained the solitude of her white-draped cubicle in the Greats' dormitory. Once the curtains fell behind her she was free to fall upon her knees beside the bed and sob there, to call upon Our Lady for succour and pity, to rock herself and hug her bleeding heart. And all these things Juliette did, until the dull thump of felt shoes upon the shining boards betokened the arrival of the lay-sister, bearing the oilskin-covered dress-basket, disinterred from some below-stairs repository, which had to be filled from the locker, dress-hooks, and drawers.

Ten minutes had been devoured in grief, forty yet remained for packing. A lover of method in all things,

frugal and prudent in the expenditure of resources ("*I am sensible, me!*"), Juliette was economical of time. Ten minutes might be spared to re-perusal of the letter that had set her faith in that dearest father rocking like a palm in tempest, and wrung such tears of anguish from the heart that worshipped him.

She drew the bulky envelope from its pure hiding-place, kissed it, and moaned a little. There were three sheets of thin foreign note, flourished over in a big, bold, soldierly hand. The date bore evidence that the letter had been penned on the Eve of Saint Sylvestre, answering to our New Year's Eve. The address was:

"*Barracks of the 777th Regiment,*
"*Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard,*
"*Versailles.*

"*My Daughter,*

"*Of news thy father has not much to tell thee that thou wouldst find of the most interesting, save that of the fashions prevailing in Paris at the moment, the most daring and eccentric is the little hat or miniature bonnet, tilted forward upon the forehead by the chignon, and spangled with beetles, dragon-flies, and other brilliant insects. Jewelled birds, yachts in full sail, or baskets of flowers, dangle from the ears of all the feminine world!*

"*The Empress is as beautiful as even she could wish to be. I saw her driving a pair of little thoroughbred mares in the low park-phæton yesterday in the Bois, near the Rond des Cascades. She was so gracious as to recognise me—though I was in civilian riding-dress—and beckoned me with her parasol-whip from the line of equestrians respectfully mustered on the left side of the road. She patted the gray Mustapha—thou wilt be glad thy horse was so honoured!—and asked if I was quite recovered of the wound I received at Solferino,—proving that an Imperial memory can be conferred with the hand that raises to Imperial rank. Later on I met Dumas,*

and—at the corner of the Rue Laffitte—Baron Rothschild and Cham, the caricaturist—and there you have a résumé of the encounters of the day.

"Do political matters really interest thee? Learn, then, a new Ministry is in formation by M. Émile Ollivier—a 'homogeneous cabinet,' is to be drawn chiefly from the Left Centre in the Corps Législatif. My father's friend, M. le General Lebœuf, Minister of War, retains the post he held in the expired Administration. M. le Maréchal Vaillant continues as Minister of the Emperor's Household. Haussmann has fallen! his ten thousand hands will no longer scatter gold from the Imperial Treasury. The last announcement emanating from the Prefecture of the Seine gave notice that the cemeteries of Mont-Parnasse, Montmartre, Ivry, and others are to be seized by the municipality in 1871. *All the private monuments are to be withdrawn before the first of April. . . . With what sorrow of heart these tragic removals will be effected thou wilt realise, who hast so often accompanied thy father, bearing wreaths to lay upon thy grandmother's tomb at Père La Chaise. Pray that the necessity to find a home for those sacred, beloved ashes may not devolve upon us.*

"Thou must know that in October, during the manœuvres at the camp of Chalons, a new and terrible weapon was placed in the hands of the Imperial army of France. It is the Mitrailleuse, *conceived by the brain of De Reffye—an invention worthy to rank with that of the Chassepôt rifle, which fulfilled such great expectations the first time the weapon was used in action, at Mentana, against the Garibaldians. How shall I describe it? I will say, briefly, that it is a rifled, breech-loading gun of from fourteen to twenty-nine barrels: that it has as many locks as barrels; that it can be transported from place to place by two men, and fired by one, who manipulates a lever, sitting upon a saddle attached to the gun-carriage. And that it is a mill that grinds—a machine that*

hails—death upon an enemy. Armed with batteries of these invincible weapons, the march of an invading army would be irresistible!

Two of these marvellous guns have been by the Imperial favour bestowed upon our regiment. The men baptised them in wine by the names of Didi and Bibi. They are treated as regimental infants, and thrive exceedingly well.

"My child, whether this news will make thee sad or joyful it must be that Juliette joins her father here at Versailles not later than on the twentieth of the month of January. Madame la Supérieure will supply thee with funds in exchange for the enclosed note of credit furnished me by my bankers. Purchase thyself—on arriving in Paris—for certainly the modes of London will never content a taste so fastidious—some fresh and charming toilettes of the evening, costumes for the house, theatre or promenade, and suitable lingerie. Last, but not least, bring a marriage-robe, crown and veil. I am not joking, I assure thee! For my daughter I have found a husband. A young man, sincere, upright, honourable, and a good Catholic, whom I have known from boyhood, whom my child will love as a wife should; and by whom she will be adored and cherished.

Thou knowest Charles Tessier, the son of my dear mother's widowed friend, the estimable Madame Tessier whom we have visited in the Rue de Provence, Versailles! Charles has succeeded to his father's large businesses at Paris, Lyons, and in Belgium, as a manufacturer of woollen dress-materials, the pattern Écossais, so much in favour with S.M. the Empress and the belles of the Imperial Court, having been imported, woven and supplied by this wise, enterprising and energetic young man. Who—but it will be for his wife to perceive and praise his many excellencies. I leave thee to the pleasant task of discovering them.

"My Juliette, if so much of thy father mingles in thy

nature that of all careers this of a soldier seems to thee the noblest—if the pursuit and attainment of military glory—distinctions won upon the field of War, appeal to thee—as Heaven knows they have to me!—since my blood first learned to thrill at the roll of the drum and leap at the sound of the trumpet—if thou hast pictured in thy innocent mind—loved in thy spotless dreams—some brave and noble officer chosen for thee by him who now writes—tear the picture!—forget the dream! For when such dreams become realities they are—how often rudely shattered by the rush and shock of armies meeting in the blood-stained field of War!

"*My dear, War is a monster composed of flesh, and iron, and steel, that like the dragon or chimera of classical mythology, devours the hopes of virgins and the happiness of matrons, and leaves children orphans and homes heaps of dust. Thou rememberest thy grandmother? She had been married just five years when my father reddened with his heart's blood the soil of Algeria. Yet when I wished to follow the profession of arms she did not endeavour to dissuade me. She hid her anguish as only mothers can, but her beloved life was shortened by anxiety undergone during the terrible war of the Crimea; that war so protracted, so disastrous to our brave ally of England—so fraught with loss and suffering to the more fortunate army of France. And that was not the only blow Fate dealt me while I served as aide-de-camp upon the staff of M. le Maréchal Grandguerrier. Thou dost not know as yet!—one day I may find courage to tell thee. . . . Even a soldier may shrink from baring wounds that are of the soul.*

"*My daughter, I have never spoken to thee of thy mother. . . . The time has arrived when——*"

The sixteen words were lined out by a heavy stroke of the quill. The closing sentences were—

"*In the event of War abroad—taking thy father from thee—perhaps to lay his bones in a trench hastily dug by peasants*

in some foreign province—or in the event of War at home,—sudden, unexpected—sweeping as a cataclysm over thy native soil, thou wilt believe me, my Juliette, when I tell thee this marriage would be absolutely for the best! Living or dead, for me to know thee safe and cherished, here at Versailles with thy husband Charles and his estimable mother, would be happiness. . . . Wilt thou consent to the union? Wilt thou obey thy father, who loves thee as his soul? One finds this a scrawl which will prove difficult to decipher. As thou knowest, I am a better artist with the sword than with the pen.

"Written here at my new quarters, which comprise a sleeping chamber and boudoir elegantly furnished, suitable for a young-lady of refinement; and a little kitchen, full of pots and bright pans.

"Thy father,
"Henri-Antoine-Albert de Bayard,
"Colonel Commandant."

VIII.

Will it not be admitted that a letter such as this was calculated to cause a flutter of agitation in the meekest feminine bosom. To be recalled from School before the completion of the tiresome process technically known as "finishing," that was matter for rejoicing. The little bedroom-boudoir in the Colonel's quarters at the Cavalry Barracks, "elegantly furnished, suitable for a young lady of refinement," presented an alluring picture, the tiny kitchen, "full of pots and bright pans," charmed. . . .

For Mademoiselle de Bayard, going back to her Colonel, after two years' absence, laden as the working-bee with the honey of accomplishments and the well-kneaded wax of useful knowledge, promised herself that it should not be long before her idol should be convinced by practical

demonstration that his Juliette had not forgotten how to cook. Irish stew, saddle-of-mutton with onion-sauce, pancakes, Scotch collops, English plum-pudding and mince-pies had been added to her lengthy list of recipes, by grace of the Convent cook, Sister Boniface, who had permitted the ardent amateur to experiment in a second kitchen, used in hot weather, abutting on the garden, and not regarded as a portion of the nuns' enclosure.

To return, and resume the old dear life of companionship, how sweetly welcome had been the summons. But nothing could disguise the taste of the powder that came after the jam.

You are to conceive the struggle in Juliette's faithful heart between obedience and anger. Marry, my faith! yes! Every sensible young girl naturally expected to be married; but a husband approved of by oneself, if selected by one's father—that was what one had had reason to expect.

And this Charles, eulogised as wise, sensible, far-seeing, and business-like. Were these qualities, though naturally desirable in the estimation of a father-in-law, attributes that weighed down the scale in the opinion of a bride? Had one ever beheld him? She shut her eyes and summoned up all the masculine faces in her gallery of mental portraits, dismissing one after the other with no's, and no's, and no's! . . . Was it not horrible to have to admit even to oneself that one had not the faintest recollection of ever having seen or spoken to him! Madame Tessier she remembered well as a little, stout, very *gentille* and amiable, elderly lady, whom she had visited with M. le Colonel, who had embraced one cordially, and insisted on one's partaking immediately and at great length—of a collation of sandwiches, fruit, cakes, and syrups; excellent—and to a hungry school-girl, welcome at any hour of the day. What more? . . . Ah, yes! Madame had much deplored

Charles's absence, possibly at Lyons or in Belgium. Further, Madame had remarked to M. le Colonel:

"My friend, your Juliette is the image of her beloved grandmother!"

"Will nobody ever say that I am like my mother?" Juliette had gaily cried. And with a strange stiff smile, the Colonel had answered for Madame Tessier,—who at that juncture had opportunely upset a dish of little sugar-cakes.

"There have been moments, my child, when I have"—he coughed rather awkwardly for M. le Colonel—"anticipated that a resemblance might exist."

Could he have been on the verge of saying "feared," and substituted the other word at the last moment? Such an idea was ridiculous, yet it had occurred to Juliette.

To questions on the subject of the faintly-remembered mother the grandmother had been impervious. The Colonel had always answered—yet with palpable reticence. . . .

"You have no mother, my little Juliette; she was taken from us, my child, while I was absent with the Army in the Crimea," or, "She left us, while yet I was detained in Eastern Russia, serving as *aide* upon the staff of M. le Maréchal Grandguerrier. . . . It is true, she was both good and beautiful when I married her! Now run and play!" Or, in later years: "Now come and read to me!" or "Walk with me," or "Ride with me," or "Now tell me how and where thou didst learn to turn out such savoury dishes with those tiny *pattes de mouche* of thine? Nowhere is there a *chef* whose choicest efforts can compare with my Juliette's. And I have dined with the Emperor—and with Milord Hertford at Bagatelle—and with Consul-General Baron Rothschild—and—*parole d'honneur!*—I have told them so!"

And all the time M. le Colonel had been keeping back

something. . . . Was it not strange, thought Juliette, that while upon the anniversary of the *Jour des Morts,* Mass had invariably been offered for all deceased relatives of the de Bayard family, the actual date of the death of one so young and beautiful had never been marked with special solemnity.

Could it be that the lost mother was not dead, but living! Oh, but impossible! . . . And yet—once awakened, the doubt would never sleep again. . . .

Did ever a girl receive such a letter? It was fuller of darts than even the fabled porcupine. It awakened stinging doubts of the kindness of the gentlest and tenderest of fathers. '*Tear the picture!—forget the dream!*" he had said. Ah, my Heaven! what young girl cherishes not such images—such visions! . . . Juliette wondered sorrowfully. Sitting on her School locker, lost in thought, her elbows on her knees, her little pointed chin cupped in the slender hands, you saw her as a haggard, weary little creature. For while joy made of Juliette a living rainbow, grief transformed her to the wan and rigid nymph that droops above a classic urn upon a mourning cameo; and anxiety or suspense, or remorse of soul set a changeling in her place, wizened her, pinched her, struck her prematurely old.

She might—to employ hyperbole—have been sitting on her locker until the present hour, had not her sad eyes lighted upon a coloured photograph of M. le Colonel in full military harness and equipment, contained in a little ivory frame fastened by a safety-pin to one of the starched white dimity curtains that imparted an air of select privacy to the little white-covered dormitory bed.

You are to behold Juliette's father—*per* medium of this pen-portrait—and would that you might have heard his cordial voice, and pressed his living hand. . . . Conceive him as a little man; and somewhat stout and paunchy; you

would never dare to have termed him so in the presence of Juliette. And yet so manly, soldierlike and ingratiating was the boldly-featured face, with its brave eyes, curled moustache and imperial, the fur *talpack* with the green and scarlet plume and the red Hussar bag, was worn with such an air, the dolman of fine green cloth, laced and corded with heavy *galons* of silver and faced with the brilliant red of his silver-striped pantaloons, fitted his compact round person with such creaseless tightness, his silver-striped *ceinture,* belts and buckles were so *point-device,* his spurred Hessian boots graced such neat small feet, his right hand rested on his hip, his left upon the hilt of his long sabre, with so pleasant a grace, that you could not but warm to this picture of a cavalry commander.

His daughter melted even as she gazed. The generous soul, once wrought to the pitch of heroism, piles sacrifice on sacrifice. She had meant to temporise, but she would not do so now. She began to comprehend, as stray sentences of the father's letter floated back, that his mood had been sorrowful when he wrote it; and that those wounds of the soul he spoke of had been bleeding, though hidden from his daughter, many a year. . . . He was never sentimental; that sentence about laying his bones in a trench hastily dug by peasants in a foreign province had been struck from the steel of his nature by some flint hurled from the sling of Fate. The words that followed, picturing War,—sudden, unexpected, sweeping as a cataclysm over the country,—had the solemnity of deep organ-notes. And the rushing tenderness in the words: "*Living or dead, to know thee safe and cherished!*" thrilled, and the dignity of the entreaty touched and conquered: "*Wilt thou obey thy father, who loves thee as his soul? . . .*"

You saw light and warmth and youth and loveliness visibly flowing back into her as she looked at the picture. The witches' changeling fled, a christened maiden remained

in her place. Words came to the lips that had been dumb, dews of tenderness bathed the eyes that had been dry as those of a sandstone statue in the Theban desert. . . .

"Dearest—beloved—best! . . . Oh! shame that I should have dreamed of doubting you! . . . There is some great reason for this decision—something terrible behind this haste of yours. What, I may not know now!—one day all will be explained to me! . . . Until then"—she rose and kissed the portrait—"until then I will trust you—who have never deceived me. . . . I will write to you as you would wish me to this very night. Now I must pack, and then go down to Monica. . . . How to answer if she should question! . . . but no, she never will!"

Dismissing the phantom of Charles, faceless and bodiless, but none the less terrible, she flew at the locker—pulled out the three drawers—stripped the row of regulation dress-pegs. Brushing, smoothing, and folding, she even sang as she worked. . . . Presently a bell rang twice. It was yet vibrating where it hung, on the passage-landing at the dormitory stair-head, when Juliette passed on her way to the guest-parlour. Monica was waiting there.

IX.

A TALL slight figure in the plain black, tight-fitting gown of a novice, made with a little cape covering the upper arm. A sweet plain face with eyes of hazel brown, framed in a close white cap with three rows of gophered frills, and there you have Monica, the chosen friend of the fiery Juliette.

"She has not three ideas! How can you think so much of her?" a jealous rival is reported to have said.

Juliette retorted with a lightning *riposte*: "Possibly no more than three, but they are good ones!" She marked

them off upon her tiny fingers. "First, to serve God. . . . Again,—to serve her friends. . . . Once more—to help her enemies! . . . If not, how is it that she spent two hours yesterday, working with you at that F major fugue in Bach's Book of Forty-eight. . . . Has not that stopped you the whistle? . . . I have eyes in my head, see you well? *Pour tout dire*—you are an ingrate, you!"

"See you well!" could be a slogan on occasion, a blood-chilling note heralding the shock of battle. But it came now in the softest of dove-notes, as they hurried to meet each other, clasped hands, and kissed.

"Dear one, I am so glad! See you well, we have a whole half-hour to spend together. . . . And there is so much to tell you that I know not where to begin." . . . She drew back frowning a little, vexed that Monica was not alone. "I entreat your pardon! . . . I did not know you entertained a visitor. . . . It is best that I retire. . . . I fear I am . . . how do you say? . . . very much in the road!"

Monica explained, holding the big red hand of an awkward young man in a shaggy greatcoat.

"You are not in the way, dear—and this is not a visitor! Let me introduce my brother, of whom you have heard. Carol, this is my friend, Mademoiselle de Bayard."

The shaggy young man, blushing savagely to the tips of his ears and the roots of his flaming hair, made a clumsy inclination, and offered the large red paw to Mademoiselle. Who gravely inspected it, drawing down her upper-lip, folding her own infinitesimal hands before her narrow waist, but made no movement to take it.

"He has angry eyes, with curious amber *taches* in them, . . ." she thought. "And he looks dusty as a voyager after a long travel. . . . Not *bien tenu* as a gentleman should be. . . . Living with Germans in Germany he has become indifferent to the *petits soins* of the toilet. I would put the hand in the fire rather than tell Monica!—but for me,

I find him horrible. What is he saying? One would expect from a being so clumsy and so shaggy, not merely speech, but a roar!"

Yet the voice was fresh and rather pleasant, as he replied to Monica's interested questions. Had he had a good journey? . . . How long had he been in London? . . . Three days, and never let her know? . . . Why not? . . . Had he dined early, or lunched, and if not—he had been understood to mumble a negative,—would he not have something now? Tea and sandwiches—Sister Boniface would cut the latter in a minute. It was only three o'clock. Benediction wasn't until four—there would be heaps of time. . . .

The mumbled refusals grew faint. Monica smiled her triumph. Intent on hospitality she hurried out of the parlour, saying with a backward glance, and a smile halved between sulky Carolan and sombre Juliette: "Sit down!—talk to each other . . . I'll soon be back again! . . ."

But the sound of the closing door smote the shaggy youth with a dumb palsy, and transformed Mademoiselle de Bayard into the semblance of a large mechanical doll in black merino.

"Stiff, pale, proud, little creature!" Carolan mentally termed her. It occurred to him that, attired in a brocade Court dress over a hooped farthingale, crowned with a wig of stiffened ringlets adorned with lace and ribbons and diamond powder, with a fan in one of those rigid little hands, she might have sat to Velasquez as a child Infanta. Or, upholstered and decked in Moorish finery, posed as one of the female midgets in the royal group of the *Familia*. Whatever Velasquez might have thought, she was priggish, prudish, dull, doltish. . . . Obstinate, too, with that long, deeply-channelled upper-lip. And how persistently she kept those long, thick, uncurling lashes down. One wondered rather what might be the colour of the eyes so con-

cealed ? Black or brown ? Or—one had had a gleam of blue when for an instant she had looked at one. Nobody cared—but perhaps they were blue ?

She made no movement to sit down, nor did she indicate a desire that he should seat himself. She flickered her sombre eyelids for an instant, and the eyes seemed inky-black. Burnt holes in a blanket, the observer brutally termed them, lifting his mental gaze to the china-blue orbs of his ideal, the colossal Britomart-Krimhilde-Brünhilde-Isolde.

In contempt of the prim puppet in the black merino he found himself adding inches to his loved one's height. Or perhaps it was to keep himself from madly shouting to Monica to tell them to hurry up with that tray. . . .

When you have pawned your jacket and waistcoat for two-and-eightpence early on Wednesday, and have dined on a sausage and mashed for threepence, supped on a drink of water from a pump in a livery-stable yard. . . . When the bed at a coffee-house has cost you a shilling, breakfast of burned-bread coffee, and roll, threepence, and you have spent twopence on a paper collar, your remaining capital stands at a shilling, and by three o'clock on Thursday, if you have not ventured to break into this, you are beginning to return to the savage of the Earlier Stone Age. Who, supposing his neighbour to be gnawing a lump of gristle when his own stomach was clamorous, dropped in upon the banquet armed with a flint axe, and possessed himself of the coveted *bonne-bouche*.

P. C. Breagh was frankly astonished at the savage voracity of his own impulses. It did not occur to him that his nerves—he had always jeered at men who had talked of their nerves—had sustained a tremendous shock, and that this was the inevitable reaction. His laboriously-crammed scientific knowledge had never yet been called upon to account for his own bodily sensations—unless in

the case of a *jammer* headache—diagnosed as the result of too many beers overnight. At any rate he was not hungry now,—and the room with its stiff row of chairs, its high-moulded ceiling, its dingy blue distempered walls, hung with engravings of Popes and Cardinals, Roman views, and Scriptural oil paintings, began to heave and surge like the decks of the evil-smelling, second-rate passenger-steamer that had brought him third-class from Ostend. He thought of that old man with the shattered skull sprawling among his bloody papers, and knew that in another moment he should—horror of horrors! despite the presence of yonder speechless Immobility in the fiddle-bodied black frock and medalled blue neck ribbon—either faint or be violently sick.

He chose the first alternative, for the whole room, with its faded gilt mirrors, its album-laden tables, its formal rows of chairs skirting the wainscot, the little mats in front of them, and the beeswaxed floor on which with growing difficulty he maintained a perpendicular position, melted away from about and from under him, letting him sink down, down . . . into bottomless, boundless abysses of intangible gray mist. . . .

Out of which, after an interval of a hundred years or three minutes, he emerged sufficiently to say in a husky whisper:

"It's nothing! I'm all——"

And then be swallowed up again. Coming to the surface in another æon or so to ask, with a wince of pain:

"Did the old fellow shoot me in the head? It—hurts like the dickens!"

And to receive the answer in a cool little silvery voice like the playing of a fountain in a mossy basin at the end of a green alley, or the trickle of a brook through lush grasses and forget-me-not beds.

"You knocked the floor with it when you made to fall

so suddenly!" Something cool and light touched his aching forehead, and the voice went on again: "It does not bleed, no! but there will certainly be one big bump there!"

"One bump. . . . Feels like one-and-twenty!" P. C. Breagh muttered, adding, with a heave and struggle that brought him into a sitting posture: "Help me up, whoever you are! . . . Not all at once. . . . *Donnerwetter!* how giddy I am! Try again in a minute! . . . Here! . . . Give me hold of your fist! . . ."

The silvery voice said, with a liquid tremble in it that might have been laughter or shyness:

"But I do not comprehend—*feesth!* Permit that I offer you the hand. . . . I am so very strong, me!"

"Strong, eh?" P. C. Breagh said vacantly, being still absorbed in the effort to remember where he was. He was certainly sitting up on a shiny, cold and slippery floor, leaning back against something warm and fragrant and soft, but he had not the least notion as to the nature of the support afforded him, nor did he associate the ownership of the voice with any person previously met.

"Strong! . . ." he repeated, and yawned, and could not leave off yawning. "*Physical exhaustion, fatigue, and lack of food,*" he mentally diagnosed, and found that, when his eyes had left off blinking and watering, the room was coming back. There were the Popes, Cardinals, and views of Roman Basilicas; there the oil-paintings of sacred subjects—there the dingy gilt mirrors, the round centre-table with books upon it, the oval one with an inkstand and nothing more,—the formal rows of chairs, instantly reviving the impression of a Convent parlour . . . and stimulating him to rise, after some slips and sprawls and flounders, and stand upright on the beeswaxed boards, smiling rather stupidly and clutching something small and soft and sentient, for it fluttered in his big enclosing palm

as a captive titmouse or robin might have done. . . . *Donnerwetter!* it was the hand whose aid he had asked a moment before in his extremity. . . . A child's. . . . No !—a girl's. . . . Who was the girl ? . . .

The truth burst on him then that it was to the mechanical doll, the stiff, pale, proud, absurd little creature, the Infanta of the drooping eyelids, the Moorish pigmy, he owed the help the little hand had given. The silvery, sweet voice was hers, and against her he had leaned as he sat on the floor gathering his scattered faculties. . . . The light touch that had visited his aching forehead, when she had said it did not bleed, had soothed him like the contact of a flower. The sweetness of the voice was in his ears again. . . .

"Will you not sit down ? You are not strong, and should manage your forces. A gentleman to faint like that I have never before seen ! Your sister will be grieved that you——"

"You are not to tell her !" He dropped heavily into the chair she had brought, and made a feebly-emphatic blow at the table near which she had set it. "Promise me ! . . . I—I must ask you to be good enough. . . . Who has gone and unbuttoned my coat ?"

X.

THE pitiable secret the shaggy garment had concealed, the absence of jacket and waistcoat, bringing his hidden poverty into horrible relief, the dinginess of the shirt of two days' wear, the deceptive nature of the paper collar, purchased at an outlay of twopence, had been revealed by some traitorous hand during his unguarded weakness of a moment back. The colour rushed back to his haggard young face in flood, as with shaky fingers he wedded the

big horn buttons to their buttonholes, and felt about his neck to find it wet. . . . Juliette had said to herself that he had angry eyes. They were tigerish as they flamed at her. Then the yellow flame died out of them and they were nothing but gray and miserable. He said brokenly:

"I—beg your pardon! I must seem the last thing out in the way of a brute to you. I had—fainted or something!—I've been through a lot of late! And you meant to—be kind, I'm sure. . . ."

He had thought her a mere child in size, but her personal dignity lent her height and presence. Her great eyes met his full, and they were deeply blue as scillas in May, with great black pupils and velvety-black bands about the irises. She said in an icy little voice:

"Sir, it is customary in these days to instruct young ladies in the knowledge of imparting medical aid to the sick or wounded. A moment since I saw you fall to the floor! I lanced myself to your side!—I debuttoned your paletot—sprinkled on your forehead water from that vase upon the table,"—she indicated the ornament with an infinitesimal forefinger,—"and in a few minutes I have the relief to behold you sufficiently recovered to demand if a man has shooted you? . . . Naturally, I do not mean to be unkind! But the promise not to speak of this to Mademoiselle, your sister, see you well?—I cannot give it! Young ladies"—there was an appalling stateliness about the tone and manner of this delivery, worthy of a mistress of deportment—"young *ladies* do not have secrets with strange young gentlemen! And Monica is my dear friend, not you!"

"Then if she is so much a friend of yours, you would wish to spare her knowledge of things certain to shock and grieve her? You would not like to have her anxious and worried about what she couldn't help, would you?" His eyes constrained and besought. His voice was humbly entreating. . . .

Juliette recognised the cunning in this appeal. She lowered her little pointed chin and levelled her thick straight eyelashes at the speaker. "Yes!" the chin said: "No!" the eyelashes replied. Thus encouraged, P. C. Breagh had an inspiration.

"But if I trust you!—you look as if you could be trusted. . . ."

From her little neck in its plain white frill to the cloud of dusky hair that crowned her, she flushed rosy as Alpine snows at sunset. Did he mean to insult, or ingratiate, this overbearing, shaggy youth? She said, with delicate reproof, completely lost upon his bluntness:

"My father has honoured me with his confidence, as long as I can remember, sir."

"Then I'll risk mine with you!" said P. C. Breagh.

"Not risk!" She had lost her glow, the sapphires of her eyes were shadowed by the blackness of the lowered lashes. "Do not say risk, for that is to gamble. See you—I will be trusted absolutely, or I will not be trusted at all!"

He understood in part, that he had wounded, and awkwardly begged her pardon, ending: "And show that you forgive me by letting me tell you what I wouldn't have my sister know, for the world!" He got up and went to one of the white-curtained, ground-glass-filled windows, that masked the outlook upon Kensington Square, and said still more awkwardly:

"You see—you must have already seen from my togs—that I am a beggar. I came back from Germany three days ago to find myself one. I was to receive a fortune from the hands of trustees, and I found that their firm had gone bankrupt. The elder partner had committed suicide—the younger had shot the moon. My thousands in his pockets!" He ground his teeth. "And if I live—and ever meet that fellow!—he'll pay me in inches of skin!"

She said, and the silvern voice had the sweetness of Cordelia's:

"I am so very sorry! Could you not prevail upon this dishonest gentleman to restore to you your property?"

P. C. Breagh said, with a flash of white teeth in his blunt-featured freckled face:

"I might, if he had been considerate enough to mention where I could find him! . . . Meanwhile . . ." He shrugged his strong young shoulders in rather a despondent way.

"Meanwhile you are without a home . . . and without money?"

He nodded, biting fiercely on his jutting underlip. "Just now! But by-and-by——"

She persisted.

"Without money and—starving! Surely, starving! and that was why you fainted! . . . And I, *mon Dieu!*—I have been blind and stupid. . . . *Je ne me doutais de rien!* Forgive me, I beg of you!"

Her small face was all white and pinched and working. Sobs choked her voice; she struck her little bosom—she wrung the tiny hands in anguish. . . . And it was all real. You could not doubt Juliette's sincerity. And though his manhood was sufficiently new to revolt at commiseration, still, it was not unpleasant to know that one's misfortunes had pierced the bucklered pride of the little Infanta, and wrung tears from the most wonderful eyes he had ever seen. And what was she saying?

"Monsieur Breagh, it is a misfortune of the most grand that you are a man and I a woman! Otherwise it would be so easy to say to you this. . . . Me, I am for the moment rich. I could—if you would accord me the permission?—relieve these pressing necessities. . . . Let me know where a letter will readily find you. . . . Do not, I entreat you, be angry that I ask this!"

But he was angry. His broad stripe of meeting red eye-

brows came loweringly down over eyes that had the tigerish flame in them. His face burned and he clenched his hands until the knuckles showed out white upon their sunburned backs. He tried to speak and could not, so choking was his indignation. To be asked to borrow from a girl —his sister's schoolmate, added one last dash of wormwood to the brimming cup of bitterness. Unlucky P. C. Breagh!

"I'm uncommonly obliged, but decent men—in this country—don't do that sort of thing! Even Frenchmen might call it caddish!" he choked out at last.

Her eyes blazed murderously, a savage dusky crimson dyed the small white face that had looked at him with such pitiful entreaty. She did not tower, she contracted—she crouched like a savage little cat ready to spring and rend him; her muscles grew visibly tense under her transparent skin. He could hear the sharp hiss of her intaken breath, and see her lips writhe in the struggle to control utterance that seemed on the point of breaking from them. When she spoke, it was in a low clear whisper, more piercing, it seemed to her unlucky auditor, than any shriek.

"Sir, when you say to me that even a Frenchman might find despicable the deed an Englishman would shrink from as a stain upon his honour,—you insult my country of France, and my brave father; and the noble gentleman who will be my husband soon! . . . It is fortunate for you that M. Charles is not here, see you well? Brave as a lion, he is a master of the sword. But enough!—I was mistaken and I have been justly humiliated. . . . Permit that I wish you a very good afternoon!"

She curtsied to the miserable P. C. Breagh with crushing ceremony, turned, and had swept from the room before he could even reach the door. It shut in his face with a deliberate gentleness that was more final than a slam would have been. . . .

"I've done it, by golly!" said P. C. Breagh.

Just after this lofty, dignified fashion had Britomart-Krimhilde-Brünhilde-Isolde quitted the scene of many an imaginary interview. That a being so small and frail should assume the airs of these heroines tickled even while it angered him. A moment more he glowered and fumed, cursing the Fate that had dealt him another set-back, and then . . . the tinkle of crockery heralded the return of Monica with Sister Boniface and a tray, satisfactorily laden with a stout brown teapot, bread and butter, home-made preserves, and a dish of somewhat solid ham-sandwiches, the welcome sight of which drove away the dark blue devils and restored his cheeriness again. He could go a long time on one full meal, he told himself, as he perpetrated a surprising onslaught on the eatables and thirstily swallowed cup after cup of Convent tea.

Replete at length, he leaned back in his chair, conscious —so overwhelming was the sensation of fulness after his protracted fast—of feeling like a boa-constrictor who had swallowed his blanket. He longed to sleep: the continual battle with recurrent yawns was becoming painful; and yet you are mistaken if you suppose that this young man did not love his gentle step-sister, and was not glad at heart to be once more in Monica's company. But Brother Ass, the body, ridden fast and far by the turbulent spirit and the eager mind, belaboured by the cudgel of Fate until his solid ribs were cracking within his shaggy hide, wanted repose more than social converse. Carolan's eyelids were closing under the stream of Monica's eager talk. His head was nodding—his mouth had fallen ajar—a faint snore was on the point of issuing from the organ immediately above it—when he started as broad awake as though a wasp had stung him. . . . Monica was speaking of Juliette. . . .

"I am so glad that you have met her !—yet sorry too, because she is leaving us so soon now. Is she not sweet ?—

with those grave airs, and those angelic eyes under determined eyebrows, and that shy wild smile . . ." thus Monica prattled on. To stop her—or to prevent himself from giving her his candid opinion of her lauded idol, he inquired whether she did not find him handsome ? and had her reply:

"Not a bit ! rather ugly than otherwise; but I love your face, and always shall, Caro ! Why, you have a moustache already !" she cried.

He blushed as Monica jumped up for a nearer inspection, to discover that the close sprinkling of dark-brown freckles on the egg-smooth young surface of his upper-lip had deceived the sisterly observation.

"The moustache will come," Monica said with a smile, "and then you will begin to be more of a dandy."

He fancied that her look betrayed a shade of disappointment. "No wonder ! such a beast as I must look !" he thought. But he said with rather a clumsy air of indifference:

"I daresay my clothes are a bit shabby, perhaps more than a bit ! But, you see, I've been knocking about on the rail—and aboard steamers—and so on."

"Still, you could be—what Juliette would call more *soigné*." There was a little accent of sisterly rebuke in the words. "And I have talked to her so much about you——"

"That you're afraid she'll chaff you, now she has beheld the wonder ! If she did I shouldn't be surprised ! . . . And if I'd known you wanted me to turn up a thundering swell, I'd have polished myself up a bit. My hair is too long, of course. . . . But—most British fellows run shaggy after a year or two at a German University."

He spoke as easily and naturally as was possible, with a lump in the throat embraced by the paper collar, and a savage pain tearing at his heart.

She said:

"It is a bargain then, and I shall see my old Caro looking as he ought to look, next time he comes here! . . . Tell me, when will next time be?"

He stuttered, inwardly writhing: "I had no idea you'd mind the sort of—togs a fellow went about in! You, who are going—you told me in your last letter! to take a vow of poverty and all the rest! . . ."

She laughed and patted the brown hand. "But *you* aren't going to take a vow of poverty. . . . You will be independent. . . . You will have everything—I hope you will have everything! that goes to make Life pleasant, and all the other things that make it—precious. . . . I am very ambitious for you, Carolan!"

He laughed rather roughly;

"Ambition in the cap and cape of a postulant! What would the Mistress of the Novices say to that?"

The face framed in the triple row of white frills was very pure and tender.

"She would say that there are more kinds of ambition than one. I am ambitious that my brother should be spoken of among men—as a man who in the whole course of his career was never once ashamed to own himself a Catholic, and to prove not only in words, but in deeds—his loyalty to his Master in the face of the world! You understand me, don't you?"

He answered her in an embarrassed, awkward way, and with a look that evaded hers.

"Of course! You mean—you'd like me to be the kind of fellow who goes regularly to Mass, and receives the Blessed Sacrament on all the Feasts of Obligation! Well, I can't boast of being quite as scrupulous as that! But at any rate I have—ringed in with the late-comers—at Christmas and Easter and Whitsuntide. . . ." He added, "Not that I should have been thought priggish if I'd gone oftener. . . . Of course the bulk of the students at

Schwärz-Brettingen were Lutheran Protestants. But about one-third were Catholics, I should think."

"And were all of them late-comers—ringing in at the last minute ?"

"I can't say that. When one did turn out for early Mass one found the churches—there were three of 'em—packed full."

"Ah ! . . . Where are you staying ?" she asked him in a changed tone.

He faltered, sick at heart at having to lie to her.

XI.

"I—I HAVEN'T got the address on me just now ! By George, though, that's just . . . Ha, ha, ha !"

"What is the joke ? Do tell me !" she urged, puzzled by the mirthless bark of laughter.

He could not have explained. His Irish sense of humour had been tickled to realise that in actual fact he did carry his address about him. Did not the shabby old frieze greatcoat constitute his hotel, chambers and club ? To change the subject he began to question her experiences in the Novitiate. She looked happy, he admitted. He did not hide that her decision to take the Veil had been a surprise.

"You see, you'd always been such a jolly girl," he told her. "Such a stunning companion—I'd never have expected it of you !"

Her bright laugh rang through the room.

"Dear boy, do you suppose that nuns are dismal beings, or indifferent to pleasant companionship ? You should hear us laugh and chatter at Recreation. Perhaps because the time for fun being limited, as the time for other things —we enjoy that half-hour's freedom all the more. Not "—

her smile did not leave her, but it changed in expression,—"not that I did not have my miserable hours. For the matter of that I have them still!"

He got up and went over to the hearth-side, where a tiny gas-fire made pretence of cheerfulness.

"I never thought it was all jam in the Novitiate. A fellow I knew who had wanted to be a Carthusian monk—and found it impossible to stick out the preliminaries!—hinted as much to me."

"I suppose," she said calmly, "that he could not submit to the—necessary experiences that lead to the final breaking of the will."

"Breaking of the will!" He kicked the old-fashioned fender savagely. "What do they do to break yours, in Heaven's name?"

"What is done *is* done in Heaven's name," she said, "and that is why one can submit cheerfully. But my first weeks in the noviceship were cloudlessly happy." She laughed a little. "I thought it was always going to be like that!"

"I—see! . . . I twig! . . . They made much of you in the beginning. . . ." He gritted his teeth and turned his face away.

"Perhaps they did! . . . I remember I had all the nicest things to do, and nobody minded. . . . I was allowed to dust the High Altar, change the flowers in the vases, and help the Sister-Sacristan brush and fold the vestments away. And one day I was permitted to wash the lunette of the monstrance. It was a wonderful experience. One could understand how the Magdalene must have felt when she wiped the Sacred Feet."

He was silent, for she had soared to heights beyond him.

"Perhaps it made me proud, for next day I was set to tidy the linen-room presses. I worked for some weeks

there, darning and mending and folding. Then I was sent to the Refectory." The smile was only in her eyes now. "I liked laying the long tables, but I hated washing dirty plates and dishes, and I simply loathed cleaning knives and forks."

"I should think so! Housemaid's duty! I understand now what you meant a minute back! . . . By George! . . . 'Miserable hours!' . . ."

Her deep eyes rested on him calmly:

"And after I am clothed—after I have received the habit—I shall most likely go on having them! I daresay I shall have them after I have taken the Veil."

He kicked the fender again, his hands shoved deep into his empty pockets, and felt the shilling, sole coin remaining to him, burn against his aching ribs. He would have given ten years of life to have been able to tell her that a home with him was ready and waiting,—in case she shrank from the final plunge. He made a great effort and groaned out:

"But that won't be for two years to come. And things may happen—who knows!"

"Oh! I pray," she said with a sudden flush, "that I need not wait two years!"

Her eagerness lifted a load that had been crushing him. In sheer relief he began to stammer:

"What a blessed idiot I am! I didn't understand . . . I thought you . . . I believed you. . . . Of course you don't do the dirty work now. That was only for a time, at the beginning. Well, I'm glad! I'd hate to think of my sister tackling servants' duties, anyway! All right! Well, what are you on to now, eh? Back at dusting the Altar and doing the flowers?"

"No. That is for others.—There are many others, and each of them must have a turn at the pleasant things. When you have lived in the community only a short time,

you begin to understand that. . . . And when you have lived in it only a little longer you learn that between the pleasant duties and the unpleasant duties there is no difference, whatever. Nothing being done that is not done for God. When I was scrubbing the desks in the Little Class to-day,—there are seventy children, and the tiny ones come in with muddy boots from the garden in wet weather, and splash the ink over everything,—I was dusting the Altar. . . . When I was washing the slates I was washing the Feet of Christ. It is no matter what we do as long as it is nothing to be ashamed of—and is done with a right intention! . . . The lowest service counts as the highest in the sight of Almighty God. It is one of the great mysteries of Faith that this should be so. But it is so! . . . There's the first bell for Benediction!"

It was too late now. But even as she rose with that wonderful look in the calm face framed in by the triple row of little starched frills, and took his hand and led him to the door, P. C. Breagh realised that he ought from the first to have told the truth to her.

The parlour door led them into the corridor upon the boarder's side. She guided him along it, left him at the entrance of the chapel, pressed his hand, whispered "Good-bye for now!" and vanished through a curtained archway on the right hand, communicating with the cloister, possibly.

He entered the chapel. A small portion of the nave, near the west door, was open to the public. Some dozen worshippers, chiefly elderly ladies, knelt or sat upon the rush-bottomed chairs. Beyond, a high, wrought-iron grille partitioned off the capacious choir, separated from the cloisters upon either hand by the tall carved screen that backed the rows of stalls. And the dying daylight of the January afternoon shone through high windows, stained in hues tender as flower-petals or brilliant as jewels,

depicting the various scenes in the life of the Virgin Mother of Christ.

The second bell had not yet rung for Benediction as Carolan bent the knee and slipped into a chair near the central gate of the grille. The place was full of the presence and perfume of flowers, and the spice of incense burned at the morning Mass. Tapers tall and short blazed on the High Altar, and a nun in purple habit and creamy veil knelt at a faldstool, absorbed in adoration of the Throned Mystery of Faith. Within the space of a Paternoster the second bell rang. The choir-sister rose, knelt in adoration, moved her stool carefully aside, and went out by a side-door in the sanctuary. And a sound as of many moving waters began to grow upon the ear. A curtain was drawn that masked an archway upon the farther side of the grille upon the right side: there was the invariable convent signal of a hand-clap, and two girlish shapes, in long white muslin veils over dark uniform dresses, entered together; and went to the bottom of the broad aisle between the rows of benches, moving sedately side by side. One wore a pale blue, the other a crimson riband supporting a silver medal. One was of solid Teutonic build, with magnificent plaits of golden hair, vivid red and white colouring, and rather stiff, if dignified, bearing. The other—a slender creature of stature almost childlike, yet with womanly coils of duskiness shot through with a tortoiseshell arrow, seemed insignificant as she walked beside her stately white-veiled mate. And yet, it was not walking, but gliding, hovering, floating . . . such airy grace of movement as P. C. Breagh had never dreamed of,—Britomart-Krimhilde-Brünhilde having covered the ground with the magnificent indolence of a glacier, or traversed it with the overwhelming rush of an avalanche, when the exigencies of some imaginary scene of passion had compelled her to "fly from her conqueror's presence," or "impetuously gain his side." Now for the

first time her inventor found himself wavering. . . . Was his heroic ideal too Titanic, too colossal, too big and too clumsy ? Would it not be just as well to shorten her by half a dozen superfluous inches—reduce her superabundant flesh ? And if at the same time, one were to darken her dandelion tresses ?—tone down the staring china-blue of her eyes into——

What was the colour ? The blue of the spring flower or the blue of the sapphire ? . . . You never knew until *she* looked at you . . . and then you weren't certain . . . you kept wanting her to look again ! Meek or tigress-like, in whatever mood you found her, you would always be wanting Juliette to look, and look again.

The revelation of his monstrous folly, the knowledge of his faithlessness came in the instant of recognition, hit him like a seventh wave and bowled him off his mental legs.

Before he had recovered, the white-veiled hovering figure had vanished. The aisle had noiselessly filled with a great procession of similar figures, standing motionless, waiting, two by two. There was a second clap of hands,—and the white-veiled column knelt in adoration. At a third signal they rose and slowly filed into their seats. And a second double line of younger girls, the Middle Class, also white veiled and white gloved, formed in the place of them, and the orderly, impressive manœuvre was repeated by these. Little children took their places, and did as their seniors. A noble voluntary burst from the organ in the high-placed loft, and the purple-habited, creamy-veiled choir-sisters poured in and took their stalls, and the lay-sisters and novices followed, filling the great choir to overflowing, as the door of the vestry was opened by a sweet-faced child in a red cassock and white cotta, and the vested priest, a scholarly-looking, gray-haired man, came in and went to his

place. And the strains from the organ changed, and a voice fresh and sweet as a thrush's, passionless-pure as an angel's began to chant *O Salutaris,*—and something like a sob broke from P. C. Breagh's throat, and hot tears came crowding, and one at least fell.

He had been shipwrecked, and here was a little green-palmed islet of peace to rest on—his only for a moment, but a moment in which to gather strength, and breath to face the raging seas again. His mood changed. He was glad he had not told Monica that he was homeless, half-clothed, and all but penniless in big, black, brutal, noisy London, and would have to water cab-horses, or sweep a crossing, or clean boots to keep alive.

Ah, what was it Monica had said ? Without her knowing it those words had been somehow meant for Carolan. Let's see—how did they go ? . . . Something this way. . . .

" *It is no matter what we do, as long as it is nothing to be ashamed of, and is done with a right intention. The lowest service counts as the highest in the sight of Almighty God. It is one of the great mysteries of Faith that this should be so. But it is so !*"

" I—see !"

He had sheltered his shamed and burning face in his big hands. But with that ray of inward light had come courage, and resourcefulness. He lifted his head bravely now and drew in a deep chestful of the sweet, warm, pleasant air.

" Perhaps the money was spoiling me !—making me look to it instead of to myself—and I've been stripped and pitched into deep water as the big fellows used to do to us little chaps, when we funked. Perhaps this is for the best—and I'll find it so one day. Perhaps I can make up for some of the caddish things I've done—refusing that girl's offered help so savagely among 'em—by taking this thing well ! Facing what there is to face—and putting

up with what I've got to. Well, I'll have a shot at it!" said P. C. Breagh to P. C. Breagh. "I'll do nothing that I'm ashamed of—and be ashamed of nothing that's honest; I'll labour for my daily bread—and for my nightly bed,—with these hands and shoulders,—if nobody will pay me for my brains!—And what I do I'll do cheerfully. Shall I kick at sweeping a crossing, when He was a carpenter?"

It seemed to him that he had not prayed, and yet he had, without knowing it. The Benediction seemed to fall on him like dew. He went out by the west door with the small congregation, and found himself in the foggy London square within sound of the roaring traffic of the London streets, with a return of the old hideous shrinking. A sensation paralleled by that of the shipwrecked castaway who has found brief resting-place upon the tiny coral atoll and must perforce commit himself, upon his crazy raft of planks and hencoops, to the shark-infested, treacherous Pacific seas again.

XII.

He strolled up a short street, and looked for and found a roomy, double bow-fronted house of warm old red brick, with huge capacious areas. "Vanity Fair" had been written there, he knew, perhaps "Esmond" too, though he was not sure. He took off his hat to the memory of the magician, and wondered where his other idol, the still living author of the "Cloister and the Hearth," and "Never Too Late to Mend" might be run to earth? and made up his mind to see Dickens' grave in Westminster Abbey on the morrow, whether it cost sixpence, or whether it did not. . . . And then he wavered, sixpence, as we know, being the moiety of his capital; and then he remembered that to-morrow could only be reached by the bridge of To-Night. He walked very fast for some distance, trying to exorcise

the demons that this thought evoked, and,—blinded by their buzzing and stinging—was in Piccadilly before he knew. The high railings of the Green Park, and the foggy solitude of the gravel-walks between the wintry lawns, tempted him to turn in and rest upon a seat awhile, for he was still somewhat giddy and shaky, and the bump so confidently prophesied by the Infanta, had appeared upon his brow.

He took off the old felt wideawake and stared at Piccadilly, brilliant with the paroquet-colours of passing omnibuses, green and royal blue, chocolate and white-and-gold. Behind the shining windows of the great Clubs, the members' heads, gleamingly bald, or affluent of hair and whiskers, alternately appeared and vanished. He caught brief passing glimpses of white-bosomed waiters, . . . the twinkle of gilt buttons on livery coats. . . . Beer-drays, driven by burly red-faced men, frequently in shirt-sleeves, went by with a whiff of malt, and the thunder of heavy hoofs. Vans of business-houses passed with a clang of bells. Victorias and landaus with muffled, and furred, and veiled ladies in them; shut-up broughams, madly-daring velocipedists on the machine of the era, a giant wheel followed by a pigmy one, made fleeting pictures on the retina of P. C. Breagh. And the double river of traffic, and the eastward and westward-flowing stream of pedestrians went by without a break in them. Gas-lamps began to make islands of yellow light upon the fog, but showed no dwindling in their numbers. He wondered if they would go on like this all night ? And then someone came up and sat down on the other end of the seat rather heavily, and the slight resultant shock and jar brought round P. C. Breagh's head.

He saw the thick-set, rather lax and round-shouldered figure of a man of middle age, dressed in a suit of tweeds patterned in giant checks of black and white and gray, the *dernier cri* in masculine morning-wear, had the observer

but known it. His hat, a low-crowned chimney-pot in hard gray felt, was tilted backwards, his hair, of a pale tow-colour, tufted out from beneath the hat in a way that cried for the attention of the barber; his whiskers, and moustache, of the same shade as the hair, were raggedly in need of the shears. He wore a buttonhole-bouquet composed of a pink camellia with Neapolitan violets, and pale lemon kid gloves, and sucked the carved ivory knob of an ebony stick he carried, until,—upon his neighbour's looking round as above recorded,—he took it from a somewhat lax and swollen mouth, and observed that it was a nice afternoon. Adding, as P. C. Breagh made a sound which might have been assent or denial:

"If it is affernoon? Without my fellow to post me, I'm apt to be wrong about time. Not that that's remarable. Lots of people the same, don't you know? Nothing extra —nothing ex—oh, damn!"

A covert anxiety—and a very visible tremulousness were combined in the speaker's manner. His large watery blue eyes were painfully vague and blurred, with distended pupils that looked uneven; his gestures were uncertain, and his words, well chosen enough, and uttered with the tone and accent usually distinctive of a gentleman, came haltingly from a tongue that seemed to be too large for its owner's mouth:

"You don't regard it as extra . . . Stop a minute!" A pause ensued, during which the vague-eyed gentleman waited, clutching his stick with both hands, and holding his swollen mouth ajar. And when he shut the mouth to shake his head, and looked at P. C. Breagh in the act of doing this, the perspiration shone upon his puffy cheeks and stood in beads upon his reddened forehead, as though it had been July instead of a foggy afternoon in January, and the pink-bordered cambric handkerchief with which he wiped his worried face, became, after this usage, a very

rag. And a queer, unwillingly-yielded-to sense of commiseration prompted Carolan to suggest:

"'Extraordinary' was the word you wanted, wasn't it?"

"Much obliged! The word, unnoutedly! 'Stror'nary how words do dodge one on occasion!" returned the uncertain gentleman in the large-patterned tweeds. He added, pulling at the ragged light moustache, with a gloved hand that was decidedly shaky: "I don't know that it matters parricurarly—but I'd prefer you to know that I'm not runk!"

"Not—what? . . ."

"Not runk!" repeated the vague-eyed gentleman emphatically. "Not cut, foozled, miffed, fizzed, screwed! Not that it's oblig—that's another of the words that perretually queer me!—or incumment on me to isplain, but I regard it as due to myself, by Gad! that you should clearly unnerstand the case. As I said to the manuscript upon the Bench when the bobby ran me in on Thursday—or was it Friray? . . . Appearances are sally against me, but I have never been a rinking man! The Doctors have a crajjaw name for my connition, which under the exissing circ—and that's another of the words that play the deuce and all with me! . . . Look at my westick, buttoned all wrong!"

He slewed round upon the seat, and throwing back the large-patterned, fashionably cut-away coat, exhibited the garment mentioned, every buttonhole of which afforded hospitality to a button not its own. His necktie, the ample, sailor-knotted necktie of the period, was under his left ear, and his shirt had come unstudded. Being appealed to, P. C. Breagh admitted that the existing condition of things left something to be desired!

"When a man entirely ripends on valets and domessicks," explained his incoherent neighbour: "a man is apt to be

neglected and so on. As a marrer of fact I live in that little joppa cottisit!" He waveringly pointed to a large, handsome private dwelling with an ornate portico, situated nearly opposite, and sandwiched between two Clubs. "An' as a narrural conquicense of my temorrary irrability to pronounce words of the most orinary nature, I am——" He drew an aimless figure in the muddy gravel with his ivory-topped, ebony stick, and went on with a weak laugh, "I am absoluly neglected by my own housekol'. My own children seem ashamed or afray of me—all but Little Foxhall—splendid little chap is Little Foxhall! But his mother—my wife——" He broke off to say—"You will escuse my touching on these priva' matters in conversation with a perfec' stranger. I am quite conscience I trepsass against the orinary usages of propriety, especially in speaking of my wife! . . . But—the fact is, sir! I am most desperately wretched. Six people imagine me runk—out of every half-dozen. While the other six—the irriots whisser it when they think I'm out of earshock—suppose me to be suffrig from Sofrig of the Bray!"

He began to tremble and shake, and put his stick between his knees to hold on to the edge of the seat with his lemon-kidded hands—and couldn't hold the stick in that position, and it fell, and P. C. Breagh picked it up and put it back.

"I am murrabliged," said the owner of the stick, "by your kind attention!" Something struggled and fought in the vague blue eyes that he turned upon Carolan,—it seemed as though in another moment Fear and Terror might have leapt glaring into sight. "And while I am boun' to ajopolise for thrussing my privarrafairs upon a stranger—I feel bound to put the quession; Why should thissorathing happen to ME? Goolor! I've been no worse than lossa urra fellers!" He rose up shaking, and shakily sat down again, nearly missing the bench.

"Bessaran loss of 'em—if you come to that!" He turned to Carolan, and the vague eyes were piteous and desperate. . . . "You see the sort of chap my luck—my damble luck—has made o' me! Yet I used to be envied—envied . . . you unnerstand! I have belonged to the best regiment in the Brigade of Guards—the devil another! I have played the bes' cards, driven the bes' turnouts, smoked the bes' cigars and had the most stunnin' women! Do you unnerstand me?—Have!" He brought down the uncertain hand in an attempt to strike his knee emphatically, and missed it; and tried to look as though he had not, and went on: "And I have belonged to the best gloves, by Gad! an' put on the clubs with the most celebrarred li'-weights! And I rode my steeplechase at York, and romped in first, and they toasted and speechified me at the Gimcrack dinner. And I won my Oaks and my Derby—and led in the winner, with all the cheeple reering;—the seeple peering—the—Goolor'! Goolor'! And the horse was Gladianor—and the victory was a popular one—and my name was a household word through the Unirred Kingom. A household word! . . ." He broke off, trembling and sweating, as the horse might have done after the race, and put the wavering hand to his head, and turned his empty blue eyes from Carolan's as though they hurt. "What was my name?" he asked himself in a dull, thick, shaky whisper, "Goolor! Goolor! What *was* my name? . . . That you, Murchison?"

For a decent figure in the irreproachable dark clothing of a servant out of livery had passed and turned back, and now approached the bench, eyeing Carolan suspiciously even in the act of uncovering its well-brushed head, and saying in the smooth accents of servility:

"It is Murchison, your Grace. It's cold, your Grace, and you've not got on an overcoat. Your Grace had best come home now, before your Grace is missed! . . ."

"Home?" His Grace looked mildly from the authoritative Murchison to the stately "cottage opposite" and one of the uncertain hands in the pale lemon kid gloves, making as though to pluck at an untrimmed whisker, found itself imprisoned in a deferential but vigorous grip.

"Home, your Grace!" said Murchison, applying muscular leverage to raise the inert figure.

"All right. Prass I better, Murchison!" He rose to the perpendicular. . . . "Wish you a very good evening, sir!" With a faded reminiscence of what might have been a courtly manner, he touched his hat to P. C. Breagh, who returned the farewell greeting, avoiding the sharp glance of Murchison. Then valet and master moved off, leaving a little trail of dialogue behind them:

"You give us the fair slip that time, your Grace! . . ."

"Perhass I did, Murchison—now you happen to mention it."

"Might have been killed crossing Piccadilly, your Grace, and none of us the wiser."

"Goolor! I'd wish I had, Murchison—if it wasn't for Little Foxhall!" . . . Then in a high, quavering note of eagerness, the plea, pitiable and ridiculous and pathetic: "I—I say! . . . Tell me the boy'd have minded, Murchison—whass a lie to you, you dam' smoo'-runged Ananias!—and I'll give you my nex' week's sovereign—I'm dead broke now!"

And Murchison and His Grace went away together, the man steering, with deft guiding touches of the master's elbow, the latter stepping high and bringing his feet down with a peculiar thump that threw a light upon the situation in the eyes of P. C. Breagh. Not softening of the brain. . . . *Donnerwetter!* what were the London doctors thinking of? Had none of them read the "*Dissertation on Tabes Dorsalis*" of the Herr Doctor Max Baumgarten,

published in Berlin only a twelvemonth previously ? and dealing fully with that rare and curious disease of the nervous system ? . . . Fibrous degeneration of the posterior columns of the spinal cord, affecting the patient's sight, gait, and—in isolated cases—speech and memory.

"I'd like to have got him to let me rap his shins ! Bet you anything there'd have been total absence of reflex action ! Remember that pedlar in the Nervous Ward of the Augusta Hospital at Schwärz-Brettingen ! . . . They cured that chap with spinal injections and regular massage. And this man—being a thundering swell and having the best advice possible—is naturally being treated all wrong ! Hang it !—how cold I am ! Better be moving !" He got up and stamped some warmth into his cold feet and flailed his cold ribs with his elbows until they tingled again. He had learned something of the wretchedness that may sometimes dwell in princely homes, yet be homeless; and fare delicately from plate of gold and silver, and yet go hungry,—and lie down to toss and stare through dreadful sleepless nights on soft luxurious beds. Therefore the bright reflections of great fires dancing on the plate-glass windows of the "cottage opposite" stung him to no comparisons. 'Is it base in me that the knowledge of the misery of this wealthy nobleman makes me more contented with my own obscure poverty ?' he asked himself, and the answer was: '*Not if your content does not make you callous to his woe !*'

"I hope that little Foxhall would have minded !" he found himself saying: "and I wish to Heaven Baumgarten could get a chance of doing something for his father ! I've half a mind to drop a postcard to him—or write a line to the Herr Professor ! . . . Stop, though !"

He remembered that he must break into his last remaining shilling to buy the postcard and pay for the stamps. Then he swung out through the Park side-gates, and now

he was one of the crowd rolling Circus-wards, and all the street gas-lamps had been lighted by certain officials with poles, furnished with hooks for keying the gas on, and perforated iron sockets filled with blazing tow that had been soaked in naphtha; thus every shop or restaurant became an Aladdin's cave of brilliancy, and the down-drawn blinds of the houses and clubs hid splendour unspeakable—if only one had been able to pull them up. . . .

Alas ! to us who live in these pushful days of Electrical Power Supply, the glories of the illuminated capital in the year of grace 1870 would appear murky enough. We should sneer at the stumpy iron lamp-posts and the chandeliers yet adorned with Early Victorian crystal glass lustres. The wood pavement, an invention *de luxe* economically confined to the West End, and upon the greasy surface of which bus-horses broke legs as easily as the most aristocratic thoroughbreds —the loose iron gratings covering basement-lights, and incidentally presenting man-traps for unwary pedestrians, as receptacles for stray umbrellas, dead cats, wisps of packing straw, discarded newspapers and orange-peel ;—the untrapped gutter-drains and sewer-vents, would awaken our ridicule and evoke our indignation, even as the displays in the shop windows, especially those of *modistes, couturiéres,* and tailors, would provoke us to mirth.

The extraordinary little hats, pot-shaped or plate-shaped, worn upon huge chignons, surmounting cascades of ringlets, *couleur Impératrice.* The preposterous frilled *paniers,* the bustles, the *jupes* of velvet or plush, flounced to the waist or kilted—sometimes to mid-leg, displaying boots—such as are worn to this hour by Principal Boys in Christmas Pantomimes and serio-comic ladies of the Variety Stage, who are, we know, Principal Boys in the pupa, or chrysalis-state. All these things compel us to hold our sides when we review them in the illustrated papers of the *Ladies' Mentor,*—which illuminating periodical—in the

dearth of Fashionable Intelligence from Paris, the hub and centre of the modish world, came to a sudden end in the October of that year, and has defied all efforts at resuscitation.

Though it is possible that the wearers of these long-vanished modes—surveying the belles of Belgravia, with their humbler followers of Brompton and Bayswater,—in the present year of progress, might be moved to laughter or provoked to wrath. To-day, when the ambition of every properly-constituted woman is to be shaped like a golliwog and dressed like a pen-wiper, or to acquire the sinuosities of a Bayadere and drape the same in cobwebs calculated to conceal nothing and suggest everything—can we honestly enlarge upon the bygone improprieties of our aunts, and moan over our mothers' taste in toilettes ?

It was just six when P. C. Breagh crossed Piccadilly Circus and turned down towards the Haymarket. Why hurry, he asked himself, when you have nowhere to go ? The restaurants were filling with diners who were going to the theatres, the smell of cooked meats made savoury the fogginess. He shrugged his shoulders, dug his hands deep into his empty pockets, and tried to whistle as he loafed along.

Misery stalked these West End streets, rampant and clamorous. A burly man devoid of legs, shuffling along with his hands in a pair of woman's clogs, entreated P. C. Breagh in stentorian tones to buy a tin nutmeg-grater. A miserable creature, whose sole garment appeared to be the upper portion of an adult pair of trousers, begged him, in the professional whine, to spare a penny for the pore orphan boy ! A dank female, in rusty weeds, stationary by the kerb, displaying a baby and a row of ballads, besought of him, for the love of Gawd ! to pity the unfortunate widow and her starving orphans.

"Buy a ballad, kind genl'man! On'y a penny—goes to a lovelly choone!"

"Ho! Dermot, you look 'ealthy now,
Your cloes is neat an' clean,
Hi never sees you drunk about,
W'erehever 'ave you been?"

The stave chanted as an appetiser for the music-lover, she wiped the baby's nose with her ostentatiously white apron, and protested it to be the image of its father—blowed up in a Mind.

"You mean a mine, don't you?" P. C. Breagh was beginning, when the widow once more burst into song.

"Your wife and Fam'ly—Har they well?
You once did use them strynge!
Ho! Har you kinder to them now?
And wence this 'appy chynge?"

Reverting to prose, as P. C. Breagh lounged listlessly on, she demanded why, if he wasn't going to buy, he had stopped and given a respectable female Tongue.

"And not even fork out a copper, you blistered swindler! You blindin', blazin'——"

"Come now, Chaunting Poll, what's all this here row about?"

The gruff, not unkindly voice of a policeman broke in upon the rusty widow's eloquence. P. C. Breagh, yielding to a sudden impulse, wheeled and swung back again.

"It's all right, constable, the lady was only having a bit of chaff with me!"

"I know her!" said P.C. 999, C. Division, removing a heavy but not brutal hand from the lady in question, "and the kind o' chaff she slings. Done Time for it, too, she 'as—before now!"

But he moved on, huge in his belted greatcoat, walking with the elephantine, clumping step begotten of boots with iron toe-caps, and iron-nailed soles at least two inches

in thickness; and the dank widow cocked a knowing eye at his retreating back, and the other at her unexpected champion.

"Good for you, my dear! Stand us a drain for luck, since you're so civil!"

He returned:

"I would if I'd got the tin! I believe I'm poorer than you are!"

"S'welp me bob! wot 'ave we 'ere? A haristocrat in distress, har yer?" she demanded.

"Not quite," he told her, as she turned the ponderous batteries of her raillery upon him. "I've seen an aristocrat in distress to-day, and he was worse than me. I'd not change!"

"Fer ten thousand jimmies hannual hincome, an' a 'ouse at Number One 'Yde Park Corner!" she jeered. "'Ow did yer lose the I'm-so-funny?—for if you 'aven't it now, you 'ave 'ad it, I'll tyke me Davy!"

"It's—a long story! Good-bye!"

He nodded and was moving on, when she shot out a gaunt hand and clutched him by the sleeve, crying:

"'Old 'ard, Mister! 'Ang on till I give this 'ere squealer to its mammy. About due now, she ought to be!"

"Isn't it . . ." His surprised look tickled the relict of the blown-up husband into a chuckle.

"Mine? Not by 'arf! A tizzy per workin'-day is wot I pays for the loan of 'er. Nothin' like a babby—specially in narsty weather like this 'ere—to touch the people's 'arts! Lil's mine, though, ain't you, deary?"

A preternaturally bright-eyed, white-faced, wizened little creature peeped out from the shelter of the ostentatiously clean apron, making a sound as of assent.

"Is she ill?" asked P. C. Breagh commiseratingly.

"Not 'er, that's her colour!"

"Hungry, perhaps?" he asked.

"Why should she be? . . . Wot did yer 'ave fer dinner, Lil? Speak up like a good gal an' tell the gen'lman!"

The small, grimy finger came out of the wide mouth. She lisped confidingly:

"Ay'po'rth o' gin 'ot, an' a stit o' totlit!"

"My God!" gasped P. C. Breagh in horror, "does that baby drink hot gin?"

"When she can get it! an' so does Hi!" explained the lady of the ballads, whom a short female in a plaid shawl and a battered brown bonnet had now relieved of the baby. She added hospitably: "Come an' 'ave two-pennorth o' comfort along o' me now! It's meat and drink both! as you'll find afore long! I'll stand treat—no blarney!"

But he groaned and fled from the tragic pair, seeing the blazing eyes of the drunkard, set in the small white childish face, staring at him from the gas-lamps and the hoardings, from the paving-stones beneath his hurrying feet, and from under the hats of passing strangers; and peering between the slowly-moving shoals of sooty smoke and muddy vapour, streaking the livid grayness overhead.

XIII.

Pall Mall was some relief. He looked for the Junior United Service Club, and found it; for the Rag,—and for a time walked up and down in the vicinity of both of these stately institutions, heartened by the memory that his father had been a member of the former—listening with eager ears to scraps of conversation between soldierly, well-groomed, clear-voiced men in evening dress, lingering on the wide doorsteps to finish some animated discussion, or waiting for cabs and hansoms, the common hack, or the smart private vehicle, low on the wheels at that date, and more heavily built than the later S. and T.

Certain bald, moustached, and red-faced veterans, scrupulously attired for the evening—delighted him extremely. "By George, General!" he heard one of them say, as he went by, his slouch forgotten, his shoulders squared, his head held up, "look at that seedy-looking chap there! Twelve to one in sixpences he's one of the 'supererogatory, useless infantrymen,' kicked out by Cardwell, after twelve years' Service. D'ye take the bet or no?"

The reference to the unpopular War Secretary under whose effacing hand infantry regiments had not only lost their numbers, but in many cases vanished from the rolls of the Army, swallowed up in the New System of Amalgamation—had, as was intended, the effect of the red rag on the bull. The General bellowed:

"Confound me if I don't! Pay the cabman, McIntosh, while I put the fellow through his paces! Hi! Hi! Come here, you, sir!"

Then, as P. C. Breagh, summoned by an imperious wave of the umbrella, stepped out of the fogginess into the mellow circle of light streaming through the glass doors of the brilliant vestibule:

"What's your regiment? . . . Give me the old designation! . . . I know nothing of new-fangled names! . . . All my eye and Betty Martin! and I don't care a dee who hears me say it! . . . What is your rank, name and battalion-number? When were you discharged? . . . Where's your small-book and certificate? . . . Got 'em about you? . . . Every soldier has 'em about him! And why don't you answer, dee you!—why don't you answer, man?"

The volley of interrogations left no room for reply. A second might have followed had not the General's crony, in unconcealed ecstasies at the sulky embarrassment of the victim and the determined attitude of the inquisitor, intervened:

"Dashed sorry! My mistake! Believe you've landed a civilian, after all, General!"

"Be dee'd! and so I have!" the General, after a raking stare, admitted. Then he took his crony's arm, they wheeled, and marched into the Club together. From whence issued, a moment later, a small boy in buttons, who, after a look up and a look down the street, pursued the retreating figure of the stalwart young man in the grey felt wide-awake and shaggy greatcoat, and arrested it with the words:

"'Arf a jiff, my covey!" He added, as the retreating figure wheeled and surveyed him in hard-eyed silence: "Wasn't it you what Old Fireworks went for just now on the 'Rag and Famish' steps?"

"The General called to me—mistaking me for——"

"I know!" The boy in buttons winked. "He's always a-pitching into somebody in mistake for somebody else! Catch hold! This is for you!"

This was a warm half-crown, thrust upon P. C. Breagh, without further ceremony. He flushed a murky, savage red, and shouted:

"What is this for? . . . Who had the infernal insolence——"

He choked. Buttons, plainly regarding the tramp who could be insulted by half-a-crown as a new species, stared at him with circular orbs of astonishment, retorting:

"What's it for? How do I know, stoopid? He told me to catch you and give it you. . . . Cool that! Well, blow *me!* . . ."

These expressions being evoked by the swift, supple movement of arm and wrist that had sent the half-crown flying into the midst of the Pall Mall traffic. A sharp ring on the wood-pavement, a yell, and a flourish of naked heels, and a street Arab had seized the treasure. As the fog swallowed the wealthy imp, said Buttons icily:

"That's your game, is it?—pavin' Pall Mall with 'arf-

bulls for gutter-pads to pick up. Better ha' tipped it to me !—or sent it back to Old Fireworks. He ain't got too many of 'em. Signs too many toast-and-water tickets to be flush !"

Perhaps P. C. Breagh, scalding with wrath as he was, would have dived in amongst the traffic to recover the coin had it been recoverable. But the snows of yester-year were not more irretrievably gone. He realised it, hung his head and hunched his shoulders, and moved away from the region of clubs, where officers of the twin Services talked shop in sublime indifference to other subjects, as white-chokered attendants supplied them with savoury meats and cheering drinks.

Be sorry for the boy with the gaunt wolf Hunger at his heels, and the black demon of Despair sitting on his shoulders. That determination of his to face what might come, and take his luck in a cheerful spirit, was to be put to a yet fiercer test before the dawn of a new day.

He was hungry and thirsty, and sorely tempted to break into his solitary shilling. But that silver barrier between himself and pennilessness was not to be lightly changed. He wondered, as he recalled to mind the many occasions upon which he had wantonly squandered and wasted money, whether an experience such as this, previously undergone, would not have been a valuable lesson in thrift ?

He presently came by a well-known theatre. It was too early for the frequenters of the Stalls and Boxes and Grand Circle. But playgoers of the humbler kind were pouring in to fill the unnumbered seats in the upper tiers, and a crowd composed of the usual elements had gathered at the doors of the Pit and Gallery, and filled the narrow side-alley in which these were situated, and overflowed into the Strand.

Queues not being officially recognised and regulated, there was a good deal of obstruction and pushing and persi-

flage. Pausing a moment under the gas-jet-bordered, glazed shelter ornamenting the box-office entrance, his unseasoned eyes winced as they took in a sad, sad sight.

You saw her as a woman not past early middle-age, nobly proportioned, and even in her dreadful degradation, imperially beautiful. An old velvet mantle covered her, from which the torn and moth-eaten fur-trimming hung in draggled festoons. A trained silk gown, stained and torn and flounced with mud of many thicknesses, trailed upon the slushy Strand pavement; a broken bonnet perched on a palpably false and inconceivably dirty chignon, the false curls that cascaded from beneath it, hid a workhouse-crop of rusty gray. . . . And she lifted her skirts aside, disclosing muddy bare feet, shod with a trodden-down, elastic-sided boot and a ragged slipper; and stepped across the threshold of the gilt and mirrored vestibule with a graceful, royal air. . . .

"Now then, missus! Out of this, will you!"

A uniformed theatre-attendant had advanced towards the intruder. But she did not retreat in terror at his truculence. She drew herself up, and folded her arms upon her bosom, and confronted the menial with a haughty, quelling stare.

"Man! who are you to drive me from this threshold? Out of the way! Clear!—and let me look at her. Do you ask whom? She! that woman who stands behind you smiling, with the white dove perched upon her whiter hand. Times have changed, my girl, since you and I last saw each other! Well, well! You are the same, whatever I may be!"

She laughed, a deep, melodious ha, ha, ha! not at all like the laughter of everyday people. Even P. C. Breagh, inexperienced as he was in such matters, recognised it as the artificial laughter of the stage. And, profiting by the momentary confusion of the functionary, she swept in

her silken rags towards the person indicated; who looked back at her with beautiful stagey eyes from a life-sized canvas, wearing a stage costume; standing in a pose of the theatre; fondling the bird that was palpably a property of the scene.

A long gilt-framed mirror hung beside the portrait, and to this she pointed with the tattered remnants of her theatrical manner, exclaiming with another of the stage laughs:

"Look upon this picture and on that! Ye gods! . . ." Adding, as the guardian of the vestibule, now wroth, advanced upon her: "No! Don't you hustle me. I'm off, governor! Farewell. Ta-ta!—until we meet again!"

She was gone, but she must have noted the boy who stared, fascinated by her haggard beauty and her dreadful misery. In fact, P. C. Breagh, passing on, had barely traversed a dozen yards of slushy pavement, before, with a bound and rush, a supple movement, predatory and feline, the woman emerged from an alley, and was by his side.

"Who are you? A waif, like me? Where do you come from? I saw you looking at me with all your eyes and your heart in them!—I played that scene with the picture and the mirror for you! You know——" She took P. C. Breagh's reluctant arm and leaned to his ear, being taller than he was, "there's always one person in the house you play to—and when that person's not there—the inspiration doesn't come. When it won't, you—shall I tell you what you do if God hasn't made you able to say 'No' to them? —you send out the devils to fetch you brandy and champagne!"

She laughed wildly and looked round suspiciously.

"Walk fast! A policeman's behind us, shadowing us. I'll tell you my story as we go. Did you ever hear of Anabel Foltringham? You must have! Everybody has! I drew crowds to that theatre you've seen me kicked out of! —I was beautiful—great—famous! Men gloated over my

beauty—they hung upon my every word. That made the devils jealous—the smooth, servile, obsequious devils in white aprons, that you find behind the scenes at every theatre. They call them dressers, but I know better, you can't deceive me! You boy, I like your face! You look at me as if I were a Christian, and a man I knew had eyes like yours! . . . Don't leave me! I'll make it worth your while to stay, only listen! . . . I'll teach you all I know, make you a greater artist than any of them. For the things that you shall learn from me—I learned myself—in Hell!"

She hung upon the boy's wincing arm, her terrible breath scorched him, her burnt-out eyes appalled—her greedy, long-nailed clutch found his flesh through his sleeve like the talons of a beast of prey. And he wrenched himself free, and fled, sick at heart; fancying that the old boot and shoe were running after him, and that the mud-trimmed silk gown flapped at his hurrying heels like leathery wings.

He broke into his shilling to pass the turnstile of Waterloo Bridge, stowed himself in a corner of one of the seated niches, and found relief in the presence of a stray kitten, sore-footed, hungry-eyed, ginger-haired, that rubbed against his legs and responded with appreciative purrs to his tentative back-strokings and ear-rubbings, administered half-unconsciously, as he wondered why human beings—under certain given circumstances, should be so much more beastly than the brutes?

The kitten jumped on his knee. He saw that its fur had been torn—probably by a dog—and shuddered at the remembrance of having more than once set a rough-haired terrier—a companion of his early boyhood—to worry stray cats—and enjoyed the carnage resulting. Why did he shudder now? Because by a feat of imagination only possible to one who was beginning to learn what it is to be

homeless and hunted and desperate, he had got inside the ginger kitten's ragged skin, and established between himself, and what we are content to call inferior creatures, a bond of brotherhood.

"Don't *you* go, Kitty! though I can't make it much worth your while to stop," he muttered. "If I'd got the things—a scrap of lint and a saucer of clean water, a needleful of silk and a dab of carbolic ointment—I could patch up that tear—you'd be as good as new inside of a week."

He yawned, and the tramp of booted feet and the shuffle of naked ones grew faint in his ears; and presently the rush and roar of the Bridge roadway-traffic dulled to a hum—and he was deadly sleepy. With blundering fingers he undid two buttons of the frieze greatcoat and tucked the kitten inside—and after turning round three times, and making a great parade of clawing the surface soft enough for com fort, it curled up and fell asleep, and its host not only slept, but snored.

Even in sleep he was dogged and haunted by those three tragic figures;—the broken-down *viveur,* the child dying on gin, the lost creature who had once been Anabel Foltringham—they cropped up in his troubled dreams, over and over again. And he woke up, and it was dark, and a sleety rain was stinging him, and even the kitten in his breast was cold and cried.

He got up, aching and stiff, hungry and thirsty, realising that he must have slept for hours. Big Ben boomed twelve. A midnight express from Charing Cross dragged its chain of yellow lights across the railway bridge with a hollow roar and rattle. One or two shapes passed, vaguely human in the wintry darkness; a Post Office van or so, with an official inside sorting bags by the light of a swinging lantern, three or four crawling cabs, a trolley with a formless mass upon it, pushed by two indistinct, slow-moving figures, coming from the Surrey side.

Towards the Strandward end of the Bridge there was a light, with murky figures moving about in it. Revealed by its two flaring naphtha-lamps, the characteristic hostelry of the London gutters, with its gaudy paint and patriotic decorations, its clean shelves piled up with homely food, and hung with common crockery, its steaming urns of hot and comforting drink,—proved a Godsend to one more hungry and homeless vagrant.

The shipwrecked mariner of his analogy might have known the same sense of relief, seeing his signal answered and some stout vessel, flying the red ensign of the British Mercantile Marine, bearing down upon his tiny, wave-washed raft. . . . P. C. Breagh was guilty of prodigality at that coffee-stall. A penny cup of coffee, weak, but hot, and a twopenny sandwich, consisting of two slices of bread smeared with mustard and enclosing something by courtesy called ham, but really pertaining to that less stylish part of the pig known as "gammon," took the edge off his savage appetite. A ha'porth of milk for the kitten, and another ha'porth of ham-trimmings, left him lord of sevenpence halfpenny cash.

Thus, warmed and cheered, he went back to his seat in the niche again, noting that every stone bench he passed had now its seated group, or prone extended figures. His recently-vacated place had its occupant, a thin, barefooted young man, indescribably ragged; who slept with his famished face—sharp and yellow as a wedge of cheese, turned to the sky, and the Adam's apple of his lean throat jerking, as though something alive, swallowed inadvertently, was madly struggling to get out.

And as he leaned upon the eastward parapet of the Bridge with the ginger kitten, now replete and happy, purring on his shoulder, and watched the wild welter of black water, pale-patched with foam and spume, rushing away beneath him, to plunge growling through the arches of Blackfriars

Bridge, and speed away under Southwark and London Bridges, past the Custom House, Traitor's Gate and the Docks, between Wapping and Rotherhithe on its way to Greenwich and Poplar and Blackwall; and thence, by the verdant heights of Charlton to Woolwich, widening to a mile here; and so on past Gravesend and the Nore Light to where it flows between Whitstable and Foulness Point—eighteen miles broad; a kingly river, carrying on its back the commerce of the world.

The wind blew bitter cold from the heights of Hampstead. A livid moon blinked through rifts in ink-black cloud-wrack, above the Shot Towers, and a huge mass of brewery-buildings on the right. On the left, revealed in glimpses and suggestions by stray moonbeams and wind-blown lamp-flares, was a great confusion of trucks and trolleys; huge cranes rearing skeleton arms aloft, colossal cauldrons, heaps of clay, beside yawning trenches, winking red eyes of warning for belated wanderers. All this beyond a banking-face of stone masonry with completed piers, showed where the Victoria Embankment would be by-and-by. Meanwhile chaos reigned; the area would have been an appropriate playground for the inhabitants of Bethlem Hospital, in hours of relaxation, or on national holidays.

P. C. Breagh laughed gallantly at his own conceit, and his chapped lips cracked and hurt him. He staunched the bleeding with his handkerchief, conscious that a day might come when he should cease to have any use for such an article. Habits die hard with us, but the cleanly ones go first, being acquired. We continue to desire food and drink long after we have left off caring about the colour of our linen—nay! long after we have become indifferent to the fact that we wear no linen at all.

He was bone-weary; his thigh-bones seemed wearing through their sockets. His knees ached, his feet were heavy as solid lumps of lead. It occurred to him that the

two things most desirable on earth were an arm-chair and a roasting fire to toast before. Failing that, a seat on a stone bench, with a north wind gnawing you was better than nothing. . . . He thought that by now one of the sleepers in the niches would have wakened up and moved on.

Vain hope. Where one had withdrawn, his place had been filled by three newcomers. Misery, Dirt, Drunkenness, Disease, and Wretchedness herded in those stony refuges, mercifully winked at by the patrolling policeman, with the unsavoury-smelling bull's-eye. And strange beings perambulated or crept the pavement; 2 a.m. is the time when you may see them !—emerging from the foul hiding-places where they pass the daylight hours, to wander forth unseen. . . .

Such goblin forms, such Gorgon faces, revealed by some fitful ray of watery moonlight, or the lamp of a languid, belated cab. . . . It was a waking nightmare, a Dantesque vision realised, inconceivably hideous to nerves already weakening. The Celtic strain derived from his father, in conjunction with the sensitive romantic nature bequeathed by Milly Fermeroy, might have urged their son to end things that bleak January night, with a leap from the parapet and a plunge into the wild black welter tumbling under the Bridge arches. But P. C. Breagh was not fated to join the procession of grim, unconscious voyagers, that wallow in the tides and circle in the eddies, flounder under the sides of barges, beat upon the piles and bridge-piers, and sink to slumber in the river-sludge awhile, before they rise, more dreadful than before, to journey on again. . . .

His mother's faith plucked him as before, from the desperate brink of the temptation; and—he had worked in the dissecting-rooms and walked the hospitals, towards that end of failure previously recorded,—and the hardening did yeoman's service now. But it went badly with him—at one

period of that week-long night particularly. . . . He never liked to speak of that experience. . . . But long, long afterwards he said to one who loved him: "I held on to my reason, and prayed Our Lord for daylight. And —I don't know how I managed—but somehow, I got through!"

He found a seat at length, not knowing by whom or how it had been vacated, and dropped into it and slept like the dead. And he awoke in a windless lull,—to a strange bluish-yellow radiance in the sky beyond the great squat dome of St. Paul's and the crowding chimneys of the City: and felt the stir and thrill and quiver that is the sign of this sad world's waking to yet another day.

Three homeless women shared the seat with him. Two were awake, watching him not unkindly. A third slept, leaning forward in a huddled attitude, propped by the handle of a basket she held upon her knees. She breathed in whistling squeals,—a night on Waterloo Bridge in January encourages bronchitis. . . . He listened for a moment, then with a prodigal impulse, dropped twopence of his eightpence into the basket on her lap. And she woke, and said with an Irish accent:

"May the heavens be yer bed!" and slept again, heavily.

The second woman snuffled out in the accents of the East End:

"Gawd bless you, good gen'leman!"

The third lifted a tattered scarlet head-shawl, and flashed a pair of jet black Oriental eyes upon him:

"Fortune and Life!"

To her he said, with a creditable effort at cheeriness:

"I've lost the fortune, mother! the life's about all I've got that's left to me!"

"And a good thing too, my gorgious! Don't yer complain of it! Come, tip us yer vast!" She added, as he

stared uncomprehending—"Right or left-hand dook—whichever the Line's brightest in. Have yer a—No! I'll give yer of my jinnepen for naught!"

He held out the broad, strong palm, grimy enough by dawn-light. She peered, spat on the chilly gray pavement and said:

"You keep up heart—there's a change a-coming soon!"

"Can't come too soon for me!" His smile was rueful.

"Keep up heart, I tell yer!" she bade him. "Yer'll travel a long road and a bloody road, and yer'll tramp it with the one yer love, and never know it. Until the end, that is, when tute is jasing. And there's a finer fortune than I meant yer to get o' me! Shake her up, Bet!" She explained, as the other woman turned to rouse the sleeper, "Taken a great cold, she has! We're fetching her to the Hospital. 'Tholomewses in Smithell, for the gorgio doctors to make her well. Though that's not where I would lie, my rye, and my pipes playing the death-tune. Shoon tu, dilya! Better shake her again!"

"Wake up, deer! There's a good soul!"

They stood up, supporting the bronchial Irishwoman between them, shaking and straightening their frowsy garments—tidying themselves as the poorest women will. Then with a farewell word, they moved on, northwards. And P. C. Breagh, following them with reddened, night-weary eyes, saw his Fate coming, though he did not know it, in the person of a small and shabbily-attired elderly man.

XIV.

He came striding from the Strand side, in a red-hot hurry, making as much noise with his boots as three ordinary pedestrians. He wore no overcoat, but was buttoned up

in a decent black serge frock, having his throat protected by a large white cashmere wrapper. Also he wore gray mixture trousers, rather baggy at the knees, and shiny, and was crowned with a well-worn silk top hat.

He walked at a great pace, swinging his arms, which were inordinately lengthy, and finished with hands of extra size, encased in white knitted woollen bags not distantly resembling boxing-gloves. When he reached the middle of the Bridge, he stopped and backed against the west parapet, folded his arms, and,—or so it seemed to P. C. Breagh, who was watching him for the sole reason that he happened to be the only cheerful-looking, decently-clad human being within his range of vision,— snuffed the breeze, and considered the prospect with a consciously-possessive air. In moving his head sideways, so as to extend his view, his sharp black glance encountered that of his neighbour, and he nodded, and thus their acquaintance began.

"I'm glad to see, young gentleman," said the little man—and "*My eye! Do I still look like anything of that sort?*" was the young gentleman's unvoiced aside. "I'm glad to see that you don't number one among the many thousands—if I was to say Millions—I shouldn't be guilty of exaggeration—who under-estimate the value of fresh morning air. For my part, without boasting, I may call myself a walking Monument to its healthiness, or as you can't put up a monument to a live man—I'll say, a Living Testimonial."

He had a yellow, tight-drawn, wearied skin, with a patch of rather hectic red on either cheekbone, and his bright black eyes twinkled at the bottom of hollow orbits, overshadowed by shaggy eyebrows of the deepest black. When he took off his hat to cool his head, from which quite a cloud of steam arose, you could perceive that he was baldish, and that his bristly hair and large mutton-chop

side-whiskers owed, like his shaggy eyebrows, their intense and aggressive blackness to a conscientious but unskilful dyer, for by the cold and searching light of morning, delicate *nuances* of green and purple were seen to mingle with their youthful sable, and here and there the roots showed grayish-white.

"I was given up by the Doctors at the age of twenty," said the little man, "as I had been previously give up by 'em at eleven and fifteen. 'The boy's in Rapid Decline,' says one, 'keep him out o' draughts and give him boiled snails and asses' milk.' My poor mother did her best, stopping up window-cracks with paste and paper, and stuffing chimneys with old carpets. And living as we was at Hampstead Village, and the Heath being productive in snails and donkeys, the rest o' the prescription was easy to carry out. Still I got lankier and went on coughing o' nights. Says Doctor Number Two, 'It's a case of Galloping Consumption. Feed him up, clothe him warmly, encourage him to take gentle exercise, and avoid chills whatever you do!' So my mother swadged me up in flannel, made me eat a mutton chop every two hours, and trot up and down the front-garden for exercise between chops; and she'd pour half-a-pint o' porter down me whenever I stood still. And in spite of all her affectionate solicitude," said the little man with a twinkle, "I kep' on wasting, and coughing and spitting, and doing everything that a young fellow in a galloping consumption could do, short of galloping out o' this world into another. And Doctor Number Three says,—being called in when I was twenty: 'It's *phthisis pulmonalis* in the advanced and incurable stage. You can do nothing at all for this young man but get him into an Institute for Incurables. Codliver Oil, Care, and Kindness,' so says he, 'may prolong his miserable existence a month or two. For the rest, there's nothing to be done!' If you'll believe me, that news was

the death of my poor mother. She'd expected nothing else for years—and yet it killed her at the end! And I acted as Chief Mourner at her funeral," ended the little man with a queer twist of his lean, sharp jaws and a momentary dimming of his keen black eyes, "in the pouring rain, and walked home without an overcoat—and got wet to the skin, and stripped, and rubbed myself dry, and made a rough supper of scalding oatmeal porridge, and went to bed and slep' with the windows open top *and* bottom. And that was over thirty year ago, and I've never missed my morning sponge-over with cold water since; nor never shut a window night or day, nor never run up a doctor's bill, and don't mean to! I left off coddling—once the blessed old soul was gone! Got better—better still—always expected to die by those who'd knowed mother. I travelled and saw Foreign Parts,—not specially going about to pick the 'ealthiest climates, knocked about abroad—came home and took to Business, and have taken to it ever since, as you may see. My health is robust," he made a show of hitting his chest again, but thought better of it. "I live plain, and make a point of getting Fresh Air into my system whenever possible.—This is the place I come to as a rule, for the morning's supply. I take it on Blackfriars Bridge after the dinner-hour, the eating-house I patronise being on Ludgate Hill," he added. "And—I don't know whether you happen to be a student of old Bill Shakespeare, but there are some lines of his which might be twisted into applying to me:" He drew a deep breath and delivered himself as follows:

"Some are born Tough, some achieve Toughness—others have Toughness thrust upon them."

He smote his chest hard with a muffled hand, and coughed in that rather hollow fashion, adding: "Without vanity, I may consider myself as belonging to the latter class! Eh?"

P. C. Breagh agreed that the speaker might be considered as belonging to the latter class.

"For at this moment I am as fresh as paint," said the little man proudly, "and as lively as a kitten, yet I have been up and about and on my legs all night! I left our place of business at 3.20 a.m., reached Charing Cross by 3.30, was on the platform when the Dover Boat Train steamed in—bringing mails and passengers that have crossed in the Night Boat from Cally—took over a shorthand-report from a Special Correspondent—who has been to Paris to gather details of a political murder," he tapped the breast of his black frock-coat, which showed the bulging outline of a thick notebook. "And in the absence of our News Editor—who's been sent to Brummagem to report Mr. Bright's speech on Popular Education, Irish Amelioration, and Free Trade,—Parliamentary affairs being at a standstill this holiday season,—I shall hand 'em to the Senior Sub., who'll distribute the stuff and have it set up by the time the Chief drops in from Putney at eleven. It's for to-morrow's issue, following the ten-line telegram we publish this morning. A column-and-a-half of Latest Intelligence!" the little man screwed up his eyes and licked his lips as though revelling in the flavour of some rare gastronomic delicacy. "And if I had the say as to the setting of it—which I haven't!—and was free to indulge my predilection for showy printing—which I never shall be!—it should be headed with caps: an inch high—and spaced and leaded all the way down."

His black eyes snapped: his hectic cheeks grew fiery.

"Headed with inch-high caps, ah! and spaced and leaded from the top to the bottom. Fancy how it 'ud lay siege to the Public Eye, and draw the Public's coppers! When I shut my eyes I can fair see the editions running out."

He recited, marking out the lines and spaces with a finger encased in white woollen:

A PRINCE MURDERS
ONE MAN AND
FIRES AT ANOTHER
IN HIS OWN
GILDED DRAWING-ROOM

PARIS SENSATION.
COUSIN OF
THE FRENCH EMPEROR KILLS
A JOURNALIST
ON THE VERY DAY WHEN
THE FRENCH LEGISLATIVE
BODY
MEET TO INAUGURATE THE NEW ERA
OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT
UNDER NAPOLEON III.

His eyes snapped, his hectic cheeks flamed, he was evidently launched on a subject that was near the heart beating beneath the bulgy pocket-book. He talked fast; and as he talked he waved his arms, and gesticulated with the large hands encased in the woolly boxing-gloves.

"I cherish ambitions, perhaps you'll say, above my calling, which I don't mind owning is that of Newspaper Publishers' Warehouseman. Perhaps I do—perhaps I don't! My own opinion is I'm before my time, a kind of

Anachronism the wrong way round," said the little man rather ruefully, "and rightly belong to—say forty years hence. As the poet Shakespeare says, and if it wasn't him it ought to have been! 'Sweet are the uses of Advertisement.' I'm a believer in Advertisement, always have been and always shall be!"

His garrulity was an individual and not unpleasant trait, implying confidence in others' sympathy. He went on:

"Being Nobody in particular, my views have never been took up and acted on. Though I enjoy a good deal of confidence and am—I hope I am! respected in my place. For as Solomon said, somewhere in Proverbs—'Designs are strengthened by counsels,' and our Chief himself hasn't been too proud to say, on occasion: 'Knewbit, what would you do in this or that case?' Such as you see me, I am often at the 'Ouse of Commons, when sittings are late and speeches have to be jotted down in mouthfuls and carried away and set up in snacks. . . . For my constitution is of that degree of toughness—sleep or no sleep matters little to me, and that I am as fresh at this moment as you are," he bit off the end of a yawn, "I wouldn't mind betting a sixpence now!"

Said P. C. Breagh, at last getting in a word edgeways: "If you lost—and you would lose!—and paid—and I expect you'd pay!—my capital would be doubled. I'm not a young swell who has got up early to look at London. I'm a vagrant on the streets—and it strikes me I must look like it. To-day I've got to find work of some kind. Can you give me a job in your warehouse? I'm strong and willing and honest—up to now! But by G—! if stealing a bunch of turnips off a costermonger's barrow will get me a full belly and a clean bed in prison, I expect I shall have to do it before long, if I can't find work anywhere!"

"Bless my soul!" said the garrulous little man excitedly. "And I thought you were a Medical Student or

an artist (some of 'em aren't over-given to clothes-brushes and soap-and-water), and here I stood a-jawing and you starving all the time! . . . Work—of course you shall have work, though I can't promise it'll be the kind o' work that's fit for an educated young gentleman——"

"Any work is fit for a gentleman," snarled P. C. Breagh, "that a decent man can do! What I want is——"

"What you want is—Breakfast and a wash and brush-up!" cried the little man excitedly. "And that you must go to Miss Ling and get. Say Mr. Knewbit sent you—I'm Knewbit,—Christian name Solomon. It's No. 288 Great Coram Street—second turn to your right above Russell Square. Cross the Strand and go up Wellington Street and Bow Street, cross Long Acre and . . . but you're too dead-beat to walk it. Take a growler—it'll be eighteenpence from here unless the cabby's lost to every sense of decency. Borrow the money from me—here it is! I give you my word you shall be able to pay me back to-morrow. Here is a cab! Hi! Phew'w!" Mr. Knewbit whistled scientifically, and the preternaturedly red-nosed driver of an old and jingling four-wheeler pulled up beside the kerb as P. C. Breagh stammered out:

"I—I can't thank! . . . You're too confoundedly kind! . . . and I'd begun to think that all men were thieves or scoundrels—except a poor, sick beggar of a swell I met yesterday, whose wife and children shun him and whose valet bullies him! I can't refuse, you know! . . . Things are too . . ."

"The fare will be two shillings if you talk one minute longer!" warned Mr. Knewbit, opening the door of the straw-carpeted, mouldy-smelling vehicle. "I can see extortion in that man's eye. I'm a judge of character, that's what I am. Bless my soul! Is that kitten yours?"

For the ginger Tom, with arched back and erect tail, was walking round P. C. Breagh's legs, purring insinuatingly,

and his companion of the night's vigil said hesitatingly, looking at the meagre, homeless mite:

"He seems to think so! And—he helped me through last night. Would you mind if I took him? I'll pay for his keep as soon as ever I——"

Mr. Knewbit shouted in a violent hurry:

"In with you! Cat and all! Don't apologise! Miss Ling adores 'em! Three in the house already—waste bits left on the dustbin for needy strangers. Don't forget! 288 Great Coram Street, Russell Square. Drive on cabby!"

He added, dancing up and down excitedly on the pavement, as the jingling four-wheeler rolled on, with the pair of castaways:

"Lord! if I only had the setting up of that young fellow's story, how I would give it 'em in leaded capitals!"

He closed his eyes in ecstasy and saw, in large black letters standing out across the clear horizon of the new day to which London was waking:

LONDON DRAMA.

BEGGARED HEIR TO WEALTH ROBBED.

CAST ON THE STREETS!

SOLE COMPANION A KITTEN!

PATHETIC STORY.

"Not that I know he is the heir to wealth, but it looks well, uncommon! Uncommon well, it looks!" said Mr. Knewbit.

XV.

When the Editorial Staff of the *Early Wire* had gone home, or to the Club, by cab or private brougham or on foot, in the blackest hours of the night or the smallest hours of the morning; when the Printing Staff had filed out, pale and respectably attired, or thundered down the iron-shod staircases in grimy, inky, oily *déshabillé*, then the Publishing Staff trooped in and took possession. And, as the lines of carts backed up to the kerb, and were filled by brawny shirt-sleeved men, who tossed the huge bales of newspapers from hand to hand with the nonchalant skill of jugglers doing tricks with willow-pattern plates and oranges, the Business Department began to empty so much that you could see the eyebrows of clerks behind the iron-nailed unplaned deal counters; and Mr. Knewbit, slackening in his terrific energy, would cease keeping count, and tallying, and writing cabalistic signs on huge packages with the stump of blue pencil that never was used up. And he would mop his face and say—in the same invariable formula:

"Well! we've broke the back of the day's work, and lucky if no one can say no worse of us!"

Later on, when the last newspaper-cart had been gorged and rattled away, and the last newspaper-boy had darted out with his armful, and his mouth open for the yell that would issue from it the moment his bare feet hit the pavement of Fleet Street, and the office of the *Early Wire* and all the other offices that had got off the Morning Issue had an air of dozing with blinking eyes and mouths half open—when the Evening Papers were at the height of strenuous effort,—Mr. Knewbit would arrange the limited supply of hair remaining on his cranium with a pocket-comb, titivate his whiskers by the aid of a tiny scrap of looking-glass nailed inside his desk-lid, dust the blacks off his

collar, straighten his cravat—which boasted a breast-pin that was an oval plaque of china, painted with a miniature of a young lady with flowing ringlets, rosy cheeks, white arms and shoulders, pink legs and a diaphanous *tutu*, dancing, crowned with roses in front of a sylvan waterfall,—and betake himself out to dine.

Sometimes he would patronise the "Old Cheshire Cheese" chop-house, where they gave you beefsteak puddings on Saturdays. Or "The Cock" would have his custom, or he would drop in at an eating-house in St. Paul's Churchyard, where Irish stew, boiled beef with dumplings and carrots, or tripe and onions, were the staple dishes in winter months. In summer you got roast mutton and green peas, and gooseberry tart with custard; but whatever the season or the dish, it was always washed down with whisky-and-water, or gin-and-lemonade, or the strongest of strong beer.

For this particular tavern was patronised by the penny-a-liners of Paternoster Row and the vicinity; out-at-elbows, and generally seedy-looking literary free-lances, who picked up a living by inditing touching tracts and poignant pamphlets for religious Societies bearing arresting titles, such as:

"Stop! You are Out at the Gathers! Or, The Tale of a Skirt," and "Dead Locks for Live Heads! By A Converted Hairdresser." Or biographical accounts of the brief lives and protracted deaths of Little E——, aged seven, or Miss Madeline P—— of X——.

Bearded men these, with bulbous noses, studded with ruby pimples; full of strange oaths, revelling in profane jest and scurrilous talk. Lanky youths with hollow eyes, uncut hair and crimson neckties, who boasted of having cast off all shackles, bonds and fetters, civil, social, moral and religious, and dreamed in their wilder moments of the inauguration of a second British Commonwealth, and

the reign of a New Era of Socialism, and the planting of the Tree of Liberty in Buckingham Palace Courtyard. . . .

And over their strong meats, and the stronger liquors with which they moistened them, these would discuss the plots of tracts, and so forth, seasoning their discourse with highly-spiced pleasantries and salacious witticisms, jesting in ribald sort at all things upon earth and elsewhere; until —as Mr. Knewbit frequently said—you expected the ceiling to come down and strike 'em speechless, and fancied you saw wicked little hellish flames playing about the cutlery.

"Not that I ever read any of their stuff, you know!" he explained to P. C. Breagh, "though I am a man that, to a certain extent, might be considered a reader. You've seen my library on the shelf by my bed-head, and though three books might be held—in the opinion of some people—to constitute rather a limited library, they're the three best books that ever were written or ever will be. Bar none!"

He was a Christian believer himself; of the easy-going, undenominational, non-Church-going kind. And when Sunday came round, Miss Ling, after seeing the beef and potatoes and Yorkshire-pudding safely into the oven, would charge him to watch over the same and guard them from burning; and put on her best bonnet and pop over to the Christian Mission Army Hall that used to be in Judd Street, W.C., for a supply of red-hot doctrine sufficient to stand her in a week of working-days, while Mr. Knewbit smoked, kept an eye on the cooking, and occasionally dipped into his library.

A popular edition of the Plays and Poems of one William Shakespeare, together with a stout and bulky volume, "Gallowglass's Encyclopædia of Literary and Typographical Anecdote," and a worm-eaten, black-leather-bound copy of the Bible—as translated from the Latin Vulgate and published by the English College at Douay

A.D. 1609, formed Mr. Knewbit's library. In the pages of these, their owner frequently stated it as his opinion, might be found the finest literature in the world. He always ended:

"And I bought Gallowglass for half-a-crown off a barrow in Camberwell, and Shakespeare was give me by a young fellow who found him dullish reading—and the Book that beats 'em both I picked up in the fourpenny box at a second-hand bookseller's in Clement's Inn!"

King Solomon and the son of Sirach of Jerusalem, with the Prophets Isaias and Hosea, were Mr. Knewbit's favourite Old Testament authors. Of the Books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus he never wearied. One wonders how much he understood, but he quarried diligently in their pages, and sometimes emerged into the light figuratively laden with jewels. Marvellous passages would drive home to the brain of the man in blinding flashes of illumination, and he would lose the place in his excitement,—being an unmethodical if omnivorous reader,—and never be able to find them again. . . . So he quoted his Prophets from memory and generally inaccurately, yet seldom without point or inappropriately. At other times, wearied with their glorious obscurity, he reverted to the plainest and simplest of all the stories ever written, and the sweetest and the saddest too. . . .

He spoke of the Saviour as though he had known Him. . . .

"I never could forgive them fellers"—I conceive he meant the Disciples—"for cutting off and leaving Him to be pinched by that gang in the Garden. It was mean, that's what I call it. Mean! But I will say they owned up their shabbiness in their writings afterwards. Though you notice they hurry over that part. And I'm not surprised! That young feller downstairs yet, Maria?"

This was at eight o'clock on the Sunday morning following Mr. Knewbit's meeting with Carolan on Waterloo Bridge.

Miss Ling, stepping nimbly about the big front kitchen in the basement, busy with her task of getting breakfast, returned that "Mr. Breagh had got up and gone out at half-past six."

"For a shave?"

Mr. Knewbit rubbed his own bristly chin rather dubiously as he asked the question. Miss Ling, impaling a round of stale loaf upon a tin toasting-fork, shook her neat head and answered in the negative. Mr. Breagh had mentioned that he was going to church.

"To church. . . . We'll hope he has gone," said Mr. Knewbit still more dubiously, "though between me and you and the toasting-fork it sounds too good to be true. . . . And 'The Brunswick Arms' is handy round the corner. If the young man don't rattle at the area-gate by the time you've finished your toasting, I shall made bold to go and look for him at the Bar. Hulloa! Here he is! Now, that's what you might call a pleasant disappointment!"

For he had glanced up at the strip of area-railings commanded by the upper panes of the kitchen window, and seen the legs of P. C. Breagh stride by at a great rate, stop, turn back, and descend the area-steps.

You are to see Miss Ling receiving his morning greeting with the wide smile that revealed an unbroken row of sound white teeth ("every one her own," as Mr. Knewbit would say) and made her thin, triangular face so pleasant. She was a staid spinster, owning to forty-nine, who would have died rather than confess to being fifty. Her magnificent hair, genuinely black and shining like ebony, was coiled upon the top of her head too tightly for beauty. Her well-marked eyebrows and candid brown eyes slanted a little upwards at the temples, and her skin was rather yellowish than olive. She was of a flat and bony figure, active and sound and tough, and in a plain way, a first-rate cook and caterer.

"Though when I left her Ladyship the Countess of Crowmarsh," said Miss Ling, "after fourteen years spent in the Castle nurseries, gradually rising from nursery-maid to under-nurse, and then becoming what his Lordship was pleased to call Head of the Bottle Department—a very humorous nobleman his Lordship was at times!—I had forgotten all I ever knew of my dear mother's kitchen-teaching—she was a cook, Mr. Breagh, who had lived with the first in the land! and when—being pensioned by the family—I decided to risk the step of taking this house and letting it out to lodgers, preferring single gentlemen—I was forced to engage a widowed person to prepare their meals at first."

"*I* remember her," said Mr. Knewbit, with his mouth full of poached eggs and bacon. "She could under-boil a pertater and calcine a chop with any elderly female I ever yet come across. Here, pussy! if you ain't too proud for rasher-rinds? And not you!" He leaned to the hearth—he was sitting with his back to the glowing range, and dropped his offering under the nose of the ginger kitten, which, having already disposed of a saucer of bread-and-milk, instantly grabbed.

"To-morrow," said P. C. Breagh, looking up from his rapidly-emptying plate with the smile which Miss Ling had already decided was pleasant, "I hope to prove to you that, like the kitten, I am not too proud for anything that comes in my way."

"Presently, presently!" said Mr. Knewbit sharply. "Everything in good time! . . . I don't like to be hurried. And—what did you say was the property you'd left with the—the Greedy Guts who runs that Euston Road hotel?"

"There were three boxes of books—chiefly works on medicine and surgery." Carolan reflected a moment, stirring his coffee with one of Miss Ling's Britannia-metal spoons. "And two trunks, with clothes and all that.

Things I valued. My student's cap and *schläger*, and the silver-mounted beer-horn the English Colony gave me, and —a Crucifix that was my mother's." The speaker blinked and spoke a little huskily: "Used to hang over my bed when I was a little chap in frocks."

"Don't be cast down. Some wave o' luck may wash your property ashore at your feet one of these days. What I will say is—I wish I had the setting-up of that story for the paper!" said Mr. Knewbit, handing in his plate for fried bread. "Supposing you,"—he jerked his eyes at Carolan —"had any talent in the literary line, it 'ud be worth your while to throw off a quarter-col. of descriptive stuff."

"Relating to my experiences in that fellow's bug-ridden lodging-house? Why, I don't doubt I could—after a fashion," said P. C. Breagh.

"After a fashion won't do. Write it the best you know! Sit down at the kitchen-table here, when Maria's gone to her prayer-meeting and I've got my pipe and Solomon to keep me quiet,—and blacken half a quire o' paper—there's plenty in the drawer there!—with the story—told short, crisp and plain, and with a dash o' humour, and within four hundred words. It would space out lovely!" said Mr. Knewbit, arranging imaginary head-lines on the clean coarse tablecloth.

LONDON SHARK

VICTIMISES STUDENT!

HE GRABS HIS GOODS

AND LETS HIM GO!

Ah, dear me! If I had had your education. But it's too late to alter that. What were you saying, Maria?"

Miss Ling was hoping that Mr. Breagh had passed a comfortable night?

"First rate, ma'am, many thanks to you!" returned the object of her solicitude.

"For," said Miss Ling, with a homely kind of dignity, "if anything was wanting, Mr. Breagh must make excuses. The arrival being unlooked-for and the notice very short."

"Dropped on you out of the skies, didn't he, Maria?" chuckled Mr. Knewbit. "And you've put him, for the present, in Mr. Ticking's bed!"

"In Mr. Ticking's bed!—Mr. Ticking," explained Miss Ling, turning to the new arrival, "who rents our third-floor front, being in the country for his holidays."

P. C. Breagh expressed the hope that Mr. Ticking would not be offended.

"Lord bless you, no!" responded Mr. Knewbit. "Ticking's an agreeable feller. He'd take you rather as a Boon than otherwise. Contributes a column of cheerful, gossipy items weekly, to half-a-dozen of the suburban and district newspapers that are springing up around us like—like mushrooms. Always on the look-out for copy—Ticking is! Now Mounteney——"

"Mr. Mounteney—who is also away on his vacation, and rents the front sitting-room on our ground-floor, and the bedroom behind it," said Miss Ling, "is a gentleman who—owing to the nature of his professional employment, is very refined and sensitive."

"Edits the Health and Beauty column for the *Ladies' Mentor*," said Mr. Knewbit, crunching fried bread noisily, "and is altogether too ladylike a gentleman to take a liberty with. For the rest, we are Full Up. To begin with, I occupy a combined bed-and-sitting room behind this kitchen, and Miss Ling occupies the large front garret bedroom; the back one being partitioned off as a Box and Lumber room, and a bedroom for the servant gal, who is now having her breakfast in the scullery, as me and Miss Ling agreed would be more considerate towards you. . . .

Coming down again to the first-floor, the front parlour and back bedroom are rented by a German gentleman, Mr. Van Something——"

"Herr von Rosius," interpolated Miss Ling, "who is a teacher at the Institute of Languages in Berners Street. . . . Second-floor front, another combined bed-and-sitting . . . Monsieur Meguet, a French gentleman who is studying Prints at the British Museum. Second-floor back, Miss Kindell, who is a copier of Pictures at the National Gallery, and a sweet artist. Third-floor, Mr. Ticking——"

"You represent him for the present," said Mr. Knewbit, nodding at Carolan.

"The trouble is, and I hope Mr. Breagh will forgive me for mentioning it," hesitated Miss Ling, "that Mr. Ticking comes back to-morrow night. . . ."

"And when does Miss Morency go ? . . . Miss Morency," explained Mr. Knewbit without waiting for an answer, "is a young person who don't give satisfaction,—regarded as a lodger,—and there you have the truth in a nutshell—Brazil for choice ! And Miss Ling's good-nature has led her, before now, to take in such people, and be taken in by 'em too, I'm bound to say !"

The little man broke off as Miss Ling, mindful of P. C. Breagh's flushed and uneasy countenance, coughed warningly.

"Miss Morency has been brought up very well, and is—she has told me,—the daughter of a clergyman in Hertfordshire," she explained as Mr. Knewbit buried his confusion in his coffee-cup. "I cannot but think it right—under the circumstances—to give Miss Morency a little time to turn round."

"She's been turning round for eight weeks," said Mr. Knewbit, rubbing his nose irritably. "And—if I was you, I'd have my latchkey back."

"To ask it would be a want of confidence, which would

wound Miss Morency, and upset her," returned Miss Ling, who had risen and was gathering the breakfast things together in rather an agitated way. She added: "And wilfully to hurt a person's feelings is a thing I could not bring myself to do, Solomon. And she goes out, evening after evening, poor thing, to call on relatives who live in distant parts of London, and is hardly ever back until very late indeed!"

"She come in at two o'clock this morning," said Mr. Knewbit, screwing up his eyes meaningly at Carolan. "And—being comparatively early myself on Saturdays—I heard her—just as I was getting between the sheets. And being anxious to solve the problem as to Why a young creature like that should go out walking on two feet—and them remarkably small and pretty ones!—and come back with Four—and two of 'em uncommon big and heavy ones, I slipped up the kitchen-stairs and looked round the corner-post. '*The seeing eye and the hearing ear,*' said my namesake, '*the Lord hath made them both*' . . . and then, just as I was a-going to ring the garret-bell and bring you down out of bed in your curl-papers, Maria, I remembered, '*Lie not in wait for wickedness in the house of the just, nor spoil his rest,*' 'him' being understood as 'her,' for you're a just woman! But judgment must be executed upon the daughter of Rahab, whether it's Sunday or whether it ain't!"

"When you begin quoting from the prophets, it takes a cleverer than me to understand you," said Miss Ling, flushed to the top of her high cheekbones. "But as a woman that's her elder, I will stand up for that poor unprotected young creature against any man that tries to take her character away!"

"It's nearly time for the Prayer Meeting at the Headquarters Branch-Hall of your Christian Mission Army," said Mr. Knewbit, looking at an enormous silver watch he

wore, and always set by the Tower clock at Westminster, and calmly taking the poker from the rail above the kitchen-range. "If you'll put on your bonnet and go, what I have made up my mind to do, will be comfortably over before the General, or the Colonel, or whichever of 'em is set down to give you Blood and Fire this morning, has fairly warmed to the fight. But if you want to be upset and made uncomfortable in your mind for a week afterwards—you'll stop! You will? Very well, and why not in your own house? Mr. Breagh, will you kindly follow with Miss Ling and act as Reserve Force in this emergency? I thank you, young gentleman!"

And armed with the poker, Mr. Knewbit left the kitchen, followed by Carolan and the landlady, closely attended by the ginger kitten, and mounted the stairs to the third-floor back.

XVI.

It was a sordid little scene that followed, but for the sake of the good woman whose unaffected charity and kindly feeling illumined its murky darkness, it shall be recorded here. . . .

Mr. Knewbit, arriving at Miss Morency's door, thumped on it, receiving no answer beyond the hurried shooting of the bolt, and the scuffling of slippered feet across the carpet. Roused by the meaningful silence to indignation, he delivered himself in the following terms:

"You inside there—and you're aware why I don't address you as a young lady!—I'm going to trouble you to unfasten that door!"

"No, you ain't!" said a feminine voice from within, defiantly. "Go downstairs and shave yourself, you silly old man!"

A thickish masculine chuckle greeted this sally.

"When we have got you and your companion out of this respectable house," quoth the wrathful Mr. Knewbit, "I may have time to attend to my Sunday twylett. Not before! Are you a-going to undo this door? Because, if you won't, I am a-going to bust it with the poker! Once!" He applied the end of the weapon named to a panel with a crack in it. "Twice!——"

"Stop!" cried Miss Ling, and Mr. Knewbit lowered the poker. "One moment, Solomon!—I want to speak to her!"

Forgetful of her neat Sabbath attire, she went down upon her knees before the door, as Mr. Knewbit joined P. C. Breagh upon the staircase, and laid her work-worn hand as gently and persuasively upon the threatened panel, as if it had been a human bosom housing an obdurate heart.

"Miss Morency! Don't be afraid, my dear! Maria Ling it is a-speaking to you!" She waited an instant, and receiving no response, went on.

"Mr. Knewbit has got it in his head—he best knows why!—that you're not Alone in that room, in a manner of speaking. . . . Open the door and prove to him he's wrong; or tell me on your solemn honour—before the God who made you and me both women!—that he's mistaken, and I'll believe you—and ask your pardon—and we'll all go downstairs again!"

There was a silence within the room, and then a thick whispering voice and a thin whispering voice held indistinct colloquy. P. C. Breagh and Mr. Knewbit exchanged looks, Miss Ling grew pale, rose, and withdrew from the door. Her clean Sunday handkerchief was in her hand and the hand shook, and her mouth was shut tightly, as, with much shuffling, an obstacle—probably a chest of drawers—was removed from the other side, the key was turned, and the bolt withdrawn.

The door opened. The defiant figure and the angry painted face of a good-looking young woman were revealed beyond the threshhold. She wore a gaudy dressing-gown trimmed with cheap lace, and a butterfly cap in the prevailing mode was set upon her mound of dyed hair. Her companion might have been the manager of a restaurant, or a West-End shopwalker. His face was sallow with debauch, and his eyes were red from liquor or sleeplessness. With the rosebud of the previous night still drooping in the buttonhole of his fashionably-cut frock-coat, and the mud of the previous night soiling his trouser-ends and his shiny boots and drab spats, and his silk hat fixed firmly on his head as though in anticipation of a scuffle, he stood behind the woman; maintaining a sulky silence, gripping his cane in a hand that was mottled and shaky. And the roll of his eyes said "Two of 'em!" as his glance took in Mr. Knewbit and P. C. Breagh.

Said the rouged, defiant young woman in the flyaway cap, turning a glare of defiance upon her landlady:

"You see now whether that"—she employed a term reflecting on the moral character of her assailant—"was mistaken, or whether he wasn't, I hope?"

Returned Miss Ling, looking mildly at the brazen countenance:

"I see! May the Lord forgive you, poor ruined young creature. But for Him having given me a good, good mother, I might be standing where you are now!"

"Never!" said Mr. Knewbit under his breath. The kind soul went on without heeding him:

"Were you led away? . . . Was it the first time? . . . Whether or no, it's not too late to change, and lead a life of decency. As for this—man . . ."

The young woman interrupted, with lowered eyes shunning her:

"We're to be married! He's promised me upon his oath!"

Her companion purpled furiously, and broke out:

"You're lying, you——! I picked you up in the Haymarket! Do you think I'm afraid of you and your bullies there? Stand back!"

Fulminating threats, he thrust roughly past Miss Ling, driving her, possibly not with intention, against the landing wall. She gave a little cry, and the poker fell. . . . He bellowed:

"—— you! You've broken my arm, you—blackguard! Where's the police?"

A grip of steel shut upon his scruff, and the voice belonging to the grip said cheerfully:

"In the street. Come down and look for 'em, my man!"

His protests were drowned in the rattling of his boot-heels on the oil-cloth-covered staircase, in the violence of his transit to the ground-floor. There, as Mr. Knewbit dodging past, opened the hall door, he was shot from its threshold as a human bullet from a spring-cannon, even then supplying a sensational turn at the Royal Alhambra Theatre—rolled down the steps, gathering momentum, and colliding with a late milk-truck that happened to be passing, suffered abrasions and the ruin of his smart frock-coat. Leaving the victim of righteous judgment to appease the justly-indignant milkman with some of the silver shed from his trousers pockets in the transit, Mr. Knewbit slammed the door, and crowed, slapping P. C. Breagh heartily upon the back.

"Neatly done! You could get a well-paid job as pitcher-out at a West-End bar, if you'd nothing better than your muscles to rely upon. . . . Wait a bit!" He vanished upstairs, walking as softly as a cat does, to return and explain:

"The pumps are at work up there! Both of 'em crying—Rahab's Daughter and Solomon's Virtuous Woman, I

mean. . . . You remember the text? '*Her price is above rubies.*' I remembered it when I saw her sitting dropping tears upon that trollop's head, that was a-lying in her lap. Well, well!" He led the way down into the kitchen, muttering, "'*As golden pillars upon bases of silver, so are the firm feet upon the soles of a steady woman. . . .*' and '*Her husband's heart delighteth in her!*' Sit down, you must want a breather . . . '*Delighteth in her*'—or would have if she'd married one capable of appreciating a character like her's."

Seeing that the mind of Mr. Knewbit was still running upon Miss Ling, P. C. Breagh ventured to ask:

"And has she never entertained any intention of——"

Mr. Knewbit nodded sagely.

"Once. You might say—there has been a Romance in her life, without exaggeration. When in service with that family of Nobs you've heard her mention,—about twenty-four years ago, when she was a strapping young woman of twenty-six—she got engaged to an under-butler—a young man with an affectionate nature and a changeable disposition, in conjunction with weak lungs. Weak lungs——" Mr. Knewbit opened the oven-door and looked in to ascertain how the mutton and Yorkshire pudding were getting on. "I've had weak lungs myself, but never found 'em an excuse for villainy! Mph! . . . Don't smell like burning—pretty right, it seems to me!"

He sat down in his Windsor arm-chair near the hearth, stretched out his carpet-slippered feet, and broke out:

"So—in the interests o' them weak lungs of his, his master's son, Lord Wallingbrook—to whom he sometimes acted as valet, took him in that capacity on a steam-yacht trip from Plymouth, *via* Trinidad to the Southern Seas. And they cruised amongst the Islands of the Pacific for months—a gay party of bachelors amusing themselves! —and—in the Paumotu Group—this precious young man

of Maria's up-stick and took French leave. . . . And that's all. And whether his master knew more than he'd tell —that's uncertain. Anyhow, a letter arrived six months after the steam-yacht dropped anchor at Plymouth, to say that he was safe and well and happy—but was never coming Home any more. And she believes . . . 'Ssh! Here she is!"

It was Miss Ling, who had been crying, undoubtedly, for her Sunday bonnet-strings were spotted as with rain, and her clean handkerchief was reduced to a damp wad. Said she:

"I have talked to that poor thing upstairs, as a woman of my age is privileged to do. And she has softened wonderful, Solomon, and from what she has owned—has seen the shame and wickedness of her life clear, and longed to be delivered from it—this many and many a day, I'm sure! So if you'll kindly whistle up a four-wheeler, I'll make bold—being late for the speaking at the Judd Street Branch Hall!—to take her down to the Christian Mission Army Headquarters in the Whitechapel Road. Where I shall find not only the General, as they call Mr. Booth, but Mrs. Booth, ready and willing, please Heaven! to help the poor soul to a better life! And though Lilla has gone home to spend Sunday with her mother at Southampton Mews, I'll stop there passing and send a note in, and she'll come round and dish up dinner—and don't you, either of you, dream of waiting a minute for me! Now I'm going back to Miss Morency—though her real name is nothing like so grand as that, poor creature!"

She turned at the door to nod and smile and say:

"And her and me will carry down her box between us, so don't show yourselves to shame her poor swelled face before the cabman."

"There's a woman!" said Mr. Knewbit exultantly, a few minutes later, as the hall-door shut and the cab-door

banged, and the vehicle containing the Daughter of Rahab and the Woman Above Rubies, rattled away in the direction of Holborn Circus.

"I wonder you——" P. C. Breagh was beginning, when he stopped himself on the brink of an indiscretion.

"Eh ? . . ." interrogated Mr. Knewbit. "What ? . . . Oh, but I did, though !"

Mr. Knewbit rubbed his chin, which needed shaving, and shook his head in a despondent way.

"I did. She was thirty-one when the Earl and Countess pensioned her—thirty-one pound a year For Life they promised. . . . And it's been paid regularly, going on for nineteen year now. And in the second year I came to lodge here early in January, and finding her a comfortable, cleanly, kindly creature, I stopped on—and all but asked her to marry me next time New Year came round. On the following anniversary I took the plunge ! after reading a passage of Solomon's peculiarly applicable to my case. '*He that hath found a good wife hath found a good thing*,' it was. Turned it up by accident, and showed it to her, and asked her. And she said No ! And goes on saying it—though I ask her for the last time regularly every year. Here's the gal coming down the area-steps. Now that meat and pudding's off my conscience, I shall put on my boots for an airing before dinner. And while I'm gone—try your hand at a neat article in moderate paragraphs describing the methods of that "—Mr. Knewbit cast about for a new term—" that Man-eating Alligator in the Euston Road. What was the name of the place ? 'Royal Copenhagen Hotel.' . . . Why, it fairly smells of roguery ! 'Royal Greenhorn' would be pretty well up to the mark."

Mr. Knewbit returned, just as the little servant pronounced dinner to be in danger of spoiling—in a cab; and thereupon ensued much jolting and bumping, suggestive of the conveyance of heavy articles up the doorsteps into

the hall. Where, being summoned from the kitchen by a bellow, P. C. Breagh recognised his own trunks and book-boxes, and wrung the hand of his good genius with a grateful swelling of the heart, and an irrepressible watering of the eyes.

"It was so kind!—and suppose I never am able to pay you—or keep you waiting a devil of a time?" he protested incoherently.

"Young fellow," said Mr. Knewbit, scowling with his heavy brows and twinkling pleasantly from under them. "You are a gentleman born, and bred and taught. You must have your Books to keep up your Latin and Greek and other learning—and to keep up your appearance you must have your clothes. No man is so down in the world that he can afford to go downer. This is my opinion, and also Miss Ling's!"

"And to-morrow Mr. Breagh will find poor Miss Morency's room swept and scrubbed and got ready for him," said Miss Ling that evening, during Mr. Knewbit's absence. "And the rent is—including Kitchen Board with myself and Mr. Knewbit, who likes homeliness, sixteen shillings per week. And if I trust Mr. Breagh for a month—that will be a chance for him of getting work to do. And that he will turn from nothing that will bring him in an honest living, I am certain; and that he will justify the confidence of Mr. Knewbit, I am equally sure!"

Said P. C. Breagh, rather chokily:

"I hope to God I may one day be able to thank you both as I should like to! You don't know what you have done for me, either of you! But I will—will repay you, I swear!"

She said in her quaint way:

"What obligation there may be could be repaid now—with Mr. Breagh's permission. He saw that most unhappy girl to-day. . . . He has seen a-many—many like her!

If he would promise me—never to bring about a fall like that, or help to drag a head so fallen, lower! Perhaps I take a liberty," said Miss Ling, "and presume, being almost a stranger. . . . Yet I ask it of Mr. Breagh, I do indeed!"

He gave the promise, in words that were broken and hurried, and with eyes that shunned her plain, kind, earnest face. She said:

"There will be a beautiful young lady, one of these days, all the happier for that promise Mr. Breagh has given. And I hope he won't think me unjust—because I am a woman! and blind to the wreck and ruin that my sex can bring about. I knew a young man, once; who was good, and honest, and worthy; and engaged to marry a young person of his own rank in life. . . ."

Carolan remembered Mr. Knewbit's story of the faithless under-butler.

"He went Abroad to Foreign Countries," said Miss Ling, mildly, "sailing on a ship that voyaged for months at a time. I am told that the women are very beautiful in the islands that he visited; and somehow or another, he was led away . . . ."

Though she looked at Carolan, her regard was curiously impersonal. It was as though she saw the wraith of some face once dear, and although changed, never to be forgotten, appear within the outlines of the face that looked back at her.

"The ship sailed Home without him. He wrote—by another vessel—to the young woman he was to have married, begging her forgiveness. . . . He had loved her, he said, and looked to be happy with her. But the sunshine and perfume and colour of them foreign places, and the spell of the beauty of their wild brown foreign women was over him. He could not come back. . . . He never may come back again. . . . But if it happened so—and he, being old and worn, and weary of strange ways and distant places,

was looking for an honest roof to shelter him, and a loving heart to lean upon at the last. . . ."

"He would find both here, I know!" said Carolan, gently.

She started, and recalling herself, said in a changed tone:

"Mr. Breagh must excuse my having delayed him here a-talking. To work and bustle is more natural to me!"

He took her hand, and having learned in Germany to pay such pretty homage without looking foolish, he stooped above it and touched it with his lips. She smiled her wise, kind smile, and said with a touching simplicity:

"Mr. Breagh is good enough to honour a poor, hard, working hand!"

He said, and the tone had the ring of sincerity:

"I wish, with all my heart, I were worthier of touching it!"

And so went upstairs to sleep in Mr. Ticking's bed.

XVII.

"My student-cap and *schläger* and the silver-mounted beer-horn the English Colony gave me, and my mother's Crucifix" found their places on the walls of the clean and comfortable room, and upon cheap stained-deal shelves the books of which Mr. Knewbit had spoken so respectfully were ranged, waiting to refresh their owner's memory whenever he chose to dip into them.

The sharkish manager of the "Royal Copenhagen Hotel" had been cowed into giving up the detained luggage, by Mr. Knewbit's assurance that the story of his knavery was even then taking literary form under the skilled hand of a young and aspiring journalist of his (Knewbit's) own acquaintance, and might shortly appear in a newspaper

to the confusion of the said manager, unless the property was surrendered upon payment of a corrected version of the bill.

These terms being hastily accepted, the Rules of Fair Play, according to Mr. Knewbit, demanded that the written record of the manager's iniquity should be consigned to Miss Ling's kitchen-fire.

"Not that it ain't a pity, for it ain't half bad for a beginner, tnough wanting in what I call snap and sparkle. But honour is honour—and if Mr. Ticking reads this, knowing you're not going to use it—you'll find the story cropping up presently in the *Camberwell Clarion* or the *Islington Excelsior*. . . . Couldn't you do something else—just for a taster ? Or haven't you something finished and put away and forgot ?"

P. C. Breagh finally disinterred from the litter of manuscript notes at the bottom of a book-box, a scrawled description of a duel between two Freshmen at a well-known tavern and concert-room outside the walls of Schwärz-Brettingen. The humours of the battle, waged in a low-ceiled room in the upper storey, crowded with chaffing, drinking, smoking students; the marvellous nature of the defensive armour worn by the inexperienced *Füchse*, the blows that fell flat, the final entanglement of their swords, and abandonment of these unfamiliar weapons in favour of fisticuffs, made Mr. Knewbit chuckle, and won the suffrages of Mr. Ticking; who said the fight and the bit of knock-about at the end was nearly good enough to be put on at the Halls.

Mr. Ticking was a journalist who possessed a knack of rhyme, penned comic ditties for Lion Comiques, when these gentlemen would sing them,—and lived in the hope of getting a Burlesque produced at a West-End Theatre one day. He had educated himself because you couldn't get on if you were not educated. He could not have explained

to you how the process had been carried out. By dexterously angling matter for short paragraphs from the swirl of happenings about him, he contrived—between the *Camberwell Clarion,* the *Islington Excelsior,* and the *Afternoon,* a late daily published in Fleet Street—to net some three pounds at the end of each week. Thirty shillings of this went to support an aged and invalid mother resident at Brixton; and if you had lauded Mr. Ticking as a heroic exemplar of filial virtues, he would have been excessively surprised. Though if you had told him that he wrote Burlesque better than Byron, he would have believed you implicitly.

Mr. Mounteney, Miss Ling's ladylike gentleman, proved to be a tall, stout, elderly, rather depressed individual, whose gold-rimmed glasses, attached to a broad black ribbon, sat a little crookedly upon a high, pink Roman nose. His light blue eyes were over-tried and rather watery, his hair had come off at the top, leaving his crown bald and shiny; his customary attire was a rather seedy black frock-coat, a drab vest with pearl buttons, and rather baggy brown trousers, and he wore turned-down collars and black ribbon neckties, and displayed onyx studs and links in a carefully-preserved shirt. Pieces of paper protected his cuffs, invariably covered with memoranda written in violet ink pencil, referring to the most delicate and confidential affairs.

For Mr. Mounteney, under the *nom de guerre* of "Araminta," edited the "Happiness, Health, and Beauty" column of that fashionable feminine monthly the *Ladies' Mentor,* into whose bureau, according to Mr. Mounteney, a vast correspondence,—penned by the wives and daughters of what Mr. Mounteney termed the Flower of Britain's Nobility and Gentry, as by their governesses and maids, and the wives and daughters of their butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers,—continually flowed. Signing them-

selves by fancy names, these confiding ones would put questions concerning matters of the toilette and so forth, the Answers to which interrogations, with the pseudonyms prefixed, were inserted month by month.

"*Little Fairy.*—A lady who weighs fourteen stone need not necessarily give up waltzing.
"*Ruby.*—We should recommend you to powder it.
"*Ravenlocks.*—To stand in the sun too soon after applying is prejudicial to a successful result.
"*Peri.*—Try peppermint."

Or the bosom of Araminta, guarded by the onyx studs and the black *pince-nez* ribbon, would be made, according to its owner, the receptacle of confidences calculated, if revealed, to convulse Society to its core. Thus burdened with secrets, it weighed heavily on Mr. Mounteney. When lachrymose with gin-and-water, to which cooling beverage he was rather addicted, he would with tears deplore the wreck of a once noble constitution, caused by reason of emotional strain. But he never gave any of his correspondents away. And being of a kindly disposition, he induced the Editor of the *Ladies' Mentor* to read and accept a brief, mildly-humorous article, descriptive of a German ladies' cake-and-coffee party; the details having been long ago previously supplied by a fellow-student at Schwärz-Brettingen, and worked up by P. C. Breagh.

Several other social paragraphs by the same hand found their way, thanks to Mr. Ticking's introduction, into the columns of the *Islington Excelsior*. In recognition, P. C. Breagh, producing pairs of basket-hilted swords, pads, cravats and goggles from one of the cases rescued from the hotel manager, instructed Mr. Ticking in the noble art of fence.

Their thrusts, lunges and stampings seriously threatening the stability of the third-floor landing, these combats

were transferred to the back-yard in fine weather, and permitted in the kitchen when it was wet. And Mr. Ticking, though he never mastered the science of the *schläger*, inducted P. C. Breagh into the mysteries of boating and velocipeding,—having a cutter-rigged Thames sailing-boat in housing near Chelsea Bridge Stairs, and a huge-wheeled bone-shaker of the prevailing type, stowed away in a decrepit conservatory adjoining the bathroom on Miss Ling's second floor.

Mr. Mounteney could not be prevailed upon to handle what he stigmatised as "deadly weapons," or to risk his person on the whirling wheel, while even fresh-water boating caused him to suffer from symptoms not distantly resembling those peculiar to the malady of the ocean. But, flabby as the ladylike gentleman appeared, he was a vigorous and tireless pedestrian, able to reduce Mr. Ticking, who was not unhandy in the usage of his feet, into a human pulp, and walk Mr. Knewbit, who had reason to pride himself upon his powers of locomotion, completely off his legs.

Expeditions were made to Addiscombe, in the green swelling Surrey country, where the once famous East India College was founded in 1812, and sold and dismantled in 1858 upon the transfer of the Company to the Crown. Of the 3,600 cadets who were trained here, the names of Lawrence, Napier, Durand, and Roberts are written upon the rolls in letters of undimming gold. Or to Sydenham with its acres of glittering crystal, its matchless fountains, and the view from the North Tower, extending over six counties and compassing the whole course of the Thames. Or to Ascot, with its stretches of sandy heathland, its noble racecourse and its woods of fir and birch, would the ladylike gentleman, accompanied by one or the other or both of his young friends, betake himself upon a highday or a holiday, when duchesses ceased from troubling and

milliners were at rest. Or they would make for Hampton Court or Bushey Park, or the ancient manor of Cheshunt, or to Chigwell, immortalised by Dickens, where in the oak-wainscotted dining-room of the King's Head, such rare refreshment of cold beef and salad, apple pie and Stilton cheese could be had, and washed down by the soundest and brightest of ales, that even "Araminta" was tempted to forget the crushing responsibilities inseparable from the delicate position of adviser upon Health, Happiness, and Beauty to the feminine flower of England's nobility and gentry, and eat and drink like a navvy free from care.

And upon the return of the three wearied pedestrians from these excursions, there would be a cheery supper in Mr. Ticking's room, or in Mr. Mounteney's, or, best of all, in Miss Ling's clean and comfortable kitchen, with more beer and more tobacco,—though by reason of a digestion impaired by the continual wear and tear of his fair clients' confidences, or by excessive indulgence in tea, Mr. Mounteney restricted himself to the mildest of Turkish cigarettes.

Mr. Knewbit, who revelled in the growing popularity of his *protégé*, though he might in secret have shaken his head over the articles and paragraphs published in the *Ladies' Mentor* and the *Islington Excelsior*, learned very willingly to whistle a beer-waltz, knocking the bottom of his tumbler on the table in time to the tune; to say "*Prosit*" when he drank, and vocally unite in the final melodic outburst of: "*O jerum, jerum, jerum, jerum, la la la!*" In which historic and legendary burden Miss Ling would also join, and laugh until the tears ran down.

Of the junior-staff room of the *Early Wire*, a bare, gaunt place, lighted by three seldom-washed windows looking on a sooty yard, or by six flaring gas-jets by night or in foggy weather, Carolan was, by the interest of Mr. Ticking, one day made free. Names of power were cut with penknives

on the ink-splashed deal tables, and the bottoms of the cane-seated chairs had given way under the weight of personalities now famous, men who were paid for a single article as much as Ticking earned in a year.

And thus P. C. Breagh joined the gallant company of the Free Lances of Fleet Street, and very soon had its offices and eating-houses, its haunts and traditions by heart. What demi-gods walked upon those historic flags and cobble-stones. Russell, the pioneer and King of War Correspondents, and Simpson of Crimean fame, whose war-sketches for the *Illustrated London News* had set England ablaze in '54-5, and George Augustus Sala, and Macready—long since retired from the stage in 1870,—the veteran Charles Mathews and Byron of burlesque fame, and Bulwer Lytton, and Tennyson and Browning, and Planché and Edmund Yates, and genial, handsome Tom Roberston, who was to die with his laurels green upon him, in another year. All these were pointed out to the young man, with certain places rendered for ever sacred by the footsteps of Dickens and Thackeray, and other of the Immortals who have passed beyond these voices into peace.

And into the world of Music and the Drama, our fortunate youth, by virtue of his initiation into the cheery brotherhood of Pressmen, was now admitted. There were free admissions for Popular Concerts where one could hear Professor Burnett and Signor Piatti play the piano and violoncello, and Santley most gloriously sing, and Sims Reeves deliver Beethoven's incomparable "Adelaida" with that splendour of voice and style that will never be surpassed. The Christy Minstrels of St. James's Hall beguiled our hero of a stealthy tear or two, and made him roar with laughter; and Blanchard's Drury Lane Pantomime of "Beauty and the Beast," with Kate Santley as Azalea, the Peri, and Miss Vokes as the lovely Zemira, was an eye-opener to a youth who had witnessed only provincial

productions in his native country, and half a dozen performances of Schiller's "Robbers," "Don Carlos," and "The Stranger" of Kotzebu as given by a stock-company of Bavarian actors at the Theatre of Schwärz-Brettingen.

Also our hero was privileged to witness the performances of Mrs. Wood as Miss Hardcastle in "She Stoops to Conquer," and afterwards in the extravaganza of "La Belle Sauvage" at the St. James's Theatre, and J. S. Clarke, then drawing the town with "Amongst the Breakers" at the Strand.

At the Olympic, Patti Josephs was touching the hearts of the British Public as Little Em'ly, Rowe was tickling people to laughter with the unctuosities and impecuniosities of Micawber, and a certain Mr. Henry Irving was holding his audiences spellbound with the sardonic slyness and hypocritical cunning displayed in his performance of Uriah Heep. And beautiful Mrs. Rousby was breaking hearts at the Queen's Theatre, and evenings spent with these, or with Professor Pepper at the Polytechnic, or the German Reeds, who were playing Gilbert and Sullivan's little operas, and "Cox and Box" at the Gallery of Illustration,—were crowned by suppers in the grill-room of "The Albion" in Drury Lane, or at Evan's at the north-west corner of Covent Garden. And these were merry times and merry mimes, my masters, and we shall not look upon their like again.

And in the environment I have endeavoured to depict, and with the associates I have tried to delineate, and with the pleasant hum and swirl of this new life setting the tune for his young pulses and mingling with his blood, Carolan's temperament recovered its elasticity, and his character developed apace. The magic gift of sympathy found in the gutter on that night of homeless, hungry wandering, was his now, never to be lost or alienated. He had learned much when he had discovered how to fit himself inside the ginger kitten's ragged skin.

The bond of brotherhood, established between a shaggy-haired boy and all other created beings capable of joy and susceptible to suffering, would hold unbroken through all the years to come. We are aware that the confidence of Mr. Knewbit had been won that morning on Waterloo Bridge, and we have heard Miss Ling (not ordinarily given to broach the subject of the faithless under-butler), tell him in her simple way of the desertion that had left her kind heart empty and sore. We may know also that Mr. Ticking revealed with the fact of the existence of the invalid mother resident at Brixton, the secret that he was beloved by a certain Annie, the orphan daughter of a deceased relative, who lived with the old lady as housekeeper and nurse. Annie, it seemed, had a little fortune of her own, and was so kind, so clever and so charming, that only the indiscreetly-evident anxiety of Ticking's mother to bring about a match, and the too plainly manifested willingness of Annie to accept the hand of Mr. Ticking, were it offered —held him back from becoming an engaged man. As it was, he spoke, in sombre whispers, of an amatory entanglement with a splendid creature, not good as Annie was good, but possessing the beauty in whose baleful lustre honest prettiness pales, and the charm whose sorcery kills the conscience, and wakens the scorching desires of man.

"Passion!—there's no going against that, you know!" he would say, wagging his head dismally, "and if ever you see Leah, you'll understand."

But when P. C. Breagh did see Leah, who presided over the gaudy necktie and imitation gold cuff-link department at an East Strand hosiers, he failed to understand at all. She had big burnt-out dusky-brown eyes and loops of coarse black hair, and a big bust and a tiny waist with a gilt dog-collar belt about it. Ticking had paid for the belt when he had taken her to the Crystal Palace, and she had admired the trinket on one of the fancy stalls in the French

Court next the Great Concert Hall. And there had been a display of fireworks on the Terrace and in the dark interval between two set-pieces there had been a mutual declaration; and the moth Ticking had singed his wings in the flame of illicit passion, and would return to flutter about the candle, he supposed, until he met his doom.

Mr. Mounteney spoke of Passion as well as Mr. Ticking, but in the exhausted accents of a world-weary cynic who had drunk of the cup to satiety. He knew so much of women, thanks to "Araminta," that he had nothing more to learn. Yet when a pert and pretty waitress who served the table at which he commonly lunched at a Fleet Street chop-house, proved ungrateful after six months of extra tips, trips to Kew and Rosherville Gardens and innumerable theatre-tickets, and told Mr. Mounteney in the plainest terms that he was "too bow-windowy in figure for a beau," and that she preferred young swells on the Stock Exchange to elderly newspaper gents, Mounteney — the expressed preference having been illustrated by demonstration,—was tragically comic in his manifestations of wounded vanity, quite funnily touching in his display of jealousy and despair. For a whole week following the betrayal his pale blue eyes were suffused with tears, his Roman nose was red, and his light hair stood up on end, where his despairing fingers had rumpled it. His black ribbon necktie straggled untied over a limp shirt-front, the violet-ink pencil memoranda on his paper cuffs had merged into blotches and blurs.

Then suddenly his dismal countenance recovered its mild placidity, his necktie was tied, his hair lay once more in smoothly-brushed streaks across his shining crown. His nose paled, his eyes reverted to their purely normal wateriness. It seemed that nestling amidst the grasses at the feet of one who had plucked the fairest flowers that bloom in the garden of Passion and sickened of their cloying

perfume and dazzling hues, the disillusioned Mounteney had discovered a simple violet, and that the humble sweetness and modest beauty of this shrinking blossom had refreshed his jaded senses and solaced his wearied mind.

In terms less obscure, Mr. Ticking explained that the humble violet was a certain Miss Rooper, who for a monthly salary attended at the office of the *Ladies' Mentor* thrice a week to assist in the Herculean task of opening the letters addressed to "Araminta"—take down in shorthand her representative's replies to the interrogations therein contained—make notes of queries impossible to answer on the spot, and ferret out the answers by application at such leading centres of information as the Reading-room of the British Museum, Heralds' College, the Zoological Gardens, the Doctors' Commons Will Office, Marshall and Snelgrove's, Whiteley's, Parkins and Gotto's, Twinings', the Burlington Arcade, Scotland Yard, and the Co-operative Stores. Ticking added that for years Miss Rooper had brought her luncheon-sandwiches to the office in a velvet reticule, and consumed them under cover of the lid of her desk, but that now, the lady being regularly engaged to Mr. Mounteney, he supposed the couple would go out to "Araminta's" usual ordinary arm-in-arm. It would be a jolly lark, he added, if Mounteney took his betrothed to his customary table, as Flossie had already been thrown over by the young jobber from Capel Court.

And when P. C. Breagh saw Flossie, who owned a turned-up nose (I quote Mr. Ticking) that you might have hung your hat on, and when he was introduced to Miss Rooper, who was on the shady side of thirty-five and had a long sagacious equine face, and boasted a fringe and chignon and waterfall of black hair as coarse as the mane of a Shetland pony, and was bridled with bands of red velvet, as the pony might have been,—and caparisoned with leather belts and strappings garnished with steel rivets, and tossed

her head when she was coquettish, and whinnied when she laughed, and looked less like a modest violet than anything else you could have imagined, he wondered very much. For Mr. Mounteney had spoken of Passion in connection with the faithless Flossie, and by the latest bulletins his sentiment for Miss Rooper had developed into Passion of the strictly honourable kind.

Could the passion on which Shakespeare had strung the pearls and rubies of Romeo and Juliet, and to which the lyre of Keats throbbed out the deathless music of "Endymion" have anything in common with the loves of Ticking and Leah, or the emotion wakened in the bosom of Mr. Mounteney by Flossie and Miss Rooper?

Could the emotion of which Carolan himself was conscious, the sudden, fierce, stinging temptation born of the bold glance of a pair of painted eyes, ogling and laughing from under a clipped fringe and a tilted hat, partake of the nature, be worthy of the designation? For Sin beckoned sometimes, and the boy would tug at his chain, forged of links of instilled religion and honour, instinctive cleanliness, and a sensitive, secret shrinking from the purchase of something that was never meant to be bartered or sold.

But there were times when, sitting at the rickety but useful and capacious old davenport in the room from tenancy of which Miss Morency had been ejected, the pen would hang idle between the fingers of P. C. Breagh, and the article commissioned by the benevolent editor of the *Camberwell Clarion* or the *Islington Excelsior,* or the more ambitious magazine-story that was being written as a bait to catch a literary reputation,—and would return as surely as the swallow of the previous summer, from the editorial offices of *Blackwood's,* or the *Cornhill,* or even *Tinsley's* —would hang fire.

With his elbows on the blotting-pad, exposing to view

the shiny places on the right-hand cuff of the old serge jacket, and his eyes vaguely staring at the strip of London sky seen above the chimney-pots of Bernard Street, P. C. Breagh would fall into a brown study, a dreamy reverie of the kind to which hopeful Youth is prone.

The outer angles of the eyebrows would lift, giving an eager, wistful look to the grey eyes that had specks of brown and golden dust in them, the nostrils of the short, determined nose would expand as though in imagination they were inhaling some rare, strange, delicate fragrance,—the upper lip would lift at the corners, showing the canines of the upper jaw—a mouth of this kind can be fierce, and yet you have an example of it in the Laughing Faun.

A delicate, rushing sweetness would envelop, enter and possess him, body and brain and mind and soul, and his heart would beat fiercely for a minute or so, and then not seem to beat at all; and he would scarcely be able to breathe for the strange new joy, and the subtle, mysterious sense of being drawn to and mingled with the being of another, someone wholly and unutterably beloved and dear. . . .

A touch, light as a flower, would visit his forehead, and a voice, small and silvery-clear, and with a liquid tremble in it that might have been mirth or shyness, would sound in his ears again. He would sigh and lean back, shutting his eyes, and feel the slight yet firm support of the delicate limbs and slender body, and the small soft hand would stir and flutter in his palm like a captured bird, and he would find himself painting in the choicest colours of his mental palette upon the background of London sky or neutral-tinted wall-paper—a face that was not in the least like Krimhilde-Brünhilde's. And then he would frown, and shake himself as a red setter might have done, plunging back out of dripping sedges at the sound of its master's whistle, and hurl himself savagely upon the pile of blank pages before him, and never pause again until the daily

task was done. Or—supposing this retrospective mood to have seized him at the ending of his stint of labour, he would set his teeth, summon up the image of his colossal beloved, and savagely add to her inches all that she had lost since his meeting with the frozen Infanta at the Convent, Kensington Square. For the truth must be told, and the painful fact faced,—that since that day the heroic Ideal of P. C. Breagh had been steadily shrinking; and the hour was coming when her golden tresses were to darken to the black-brown hue of rain-soaked oak leaves in Winter,—when her roseate cheeks were to blanch to the hue of old ivory, when her towering stature and robust limbs were to dwindle to the slender shape and delicate extremities of an elfin maiden's, and her late worshipper was shamelessly to dote upon the change.

But had this been foretold to P. C. Breagh, he would have scouted the prophet as an impostor, and laughed the prophecy to scorn. Came a day when, fastidiously groomed, and dressed in well-cut, carefully-chosen clothes, he called upon Monica at the Convent, this time to apprise her of the loss of his inheritance, and to assure her of his present well-being, despite the change in his prospects brought about by the defalcations of Mustey and Son.

He had not intended to ask after the Infanta; the query slipped out quite accidentally. But when Monica returned that by the latest advice received from France, the health of Mademoiselle Bayard might be pronounced excellent, the querist was conscious of a tightness within his collar, and a sudden rush of blood reddened him to the hair as his sister added:

"She may be 'Madame' and not 'Mademoiselle' to-day, since what date is uncertain. For her marriage was to take place almost instantly on her return to Paris, she told us. Her father—he is Colonel of the 777th Mounted

Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard—had set his heart on this—she worships him—she would consent to any sacrifice—would let herself be cut to pieces if he but wished it. Dear Juliette!"

P. C. Breagh got out, with difficulty, "Then—but—look here, doesn't she love the fellow?"

The word last but three got out with difficulty. His throat was hurt by its passage. He gulped as he stared at Monica, moistening his dry lips.

"The fellow." Her eyes widened. "You don't call the Colonel—that? . . ."

"Of course not. I referred to the young lady's husband. Actual or yet expectant." He boggled horribly in the attempt to seem natural and at ease. "Why should it be a sacrifice to obey her father—what has the—the affair got in common with cutting to pieces if she—if she——"

He stuck there. Monica, of all Juliette's friends alone held worthy to share the aching secret, had not been told, for her own peace of mind. Yet loving much, she had seen much. Now she sat silent. But a little line of distress came between her placid eyebrows, and tears were gathering behind the beautiful, tender eyes, in readiness to fall when next they might unseen. Carolan went on, not looking at her:

"She said he was a noble gentleman,—master of the sword, and brave as a lion. That doesn't suggest that she—would think herself sacrificed in marrying him?"

A sigh heaved Monica's breast and exhaled unnoticed. He mumbled with a hangdog grace:

"Could you, when you happen to write, just give her a message? Don't ask what it means—it has to do with something we spoke of here the other day when you were out of the room."

His eyes sought one particular square in the centre of the beeswaxed parquet, where he had sat leaning against the Infanta's knees.

"Tell her that the man—a fellow-student of mine at Schwärz-Brettingen—realised not long after the—the girl—she will remember the girl's name!—after the girl had made the offer—she will not have forgotten what that was!—from how kind and generous a heart it came. And she will believe—she must believe!—that he has loathed himself heartily for the brutal way in which he answered her. And he entreats her to forgive, and he thanks her with all——"

Something splashed upon the clenched hand with which he had unconsciously emphasised his utterance. He wiped off the drop furtively, and said, still not looking at Monica, but scowling at that particular square in the middle of the parquet:

"With all his heart! You won't forget?"

He made her promise it, and left her wondering.

XVIII.

Being a daughter of France, and a Parisienne to the finger-tips, it could not be that the return to Paris, delightful capital where all the brilliancy, *esprit*, good taste, and refinement of modern life were concentrated, should fail to rejoice the heart of Mademoiselle de Bayard. Her characteristic quality of humour, a trait not derived from the paternal strain, made her omit three items from the list of purchases commanded by M. le Colonel. To supply oneself beforehand with a complete bridal costume in the view of immediate union with a husband never to one's knowledge previously beheld, could anything be more outrageously impossible! Juliette knew that she would titter hysterically behind the stately backs of the powdered and frock-coated gentlemen who parade Departments, and probably laugh to madness in the faces of the powdered

and frizzled young ladies who should seek to minister to her needs.

And so, though the fresh and charming toilettes of the evening, the promenade and the theatre, with the suitable lingerie, were added to Juliette's wardrobe, the nuptial robe, crown, and veil remained unbought.

Paris, a seething pot since the Auteuil assassination early in that January, was in a state of ebullition upon Juliette's return. Passing in a *fiacre* along the Champs Élysées, the progress of Mademoiselle's hired vehicle was stopped. A regiment of mounted Chasseurs and a detachment of the Guides blocked the Avenue to stem the black torrents of people rolling towards Neuilly, to attend the funeral of the murdered journalist Victor Noir. The National Guards occupied the Place de la Concorde, and in front of the Corps Législatif was a battalion of infantry, besides a force of *sergents de ville*. Yet by other thoroughfares inky streams of men and women poured steadily nor'-west, and a vast concourse packed the Passage Masséna, where the dead man had lived, and when his coffin was brought out, weeping friends unharnessed the bony black horses from the shabby hearse, and six of them, hugging the pole, drew it to the Cemetery.

But no speeches were made, though an instant previous to the lowering of the coffin a dishevelled, red-eyed woman leaped upon the plinth of a memorial column that neighboured the grave dug in the Jewish quarter of the Cemetery, and shrieked:

"He was only twenty-two, and was to have been married in a few days! Vengeance upon the nephew of the Corsican wild boar! Death to the murderer Bonaparte and all his bloody race! . . ."

The rest was lost in the strangled whoopings of hysteria. But upon the ten thousand faces that had turned her way a crimson glow was thrown, as though the sun of Imperial

glory were indeed about to set, and a yell went up that might have reached the ears of the princely homicide lodged in the Conciergerie by order of his Imperial relative, pending that extravagant farce of the Tribunal of Tours. There was a rush of police, and the woman was pulled down and spirited away, it is said, by Revolutionists! But the *Marseillaise* had already cried more loudly than the red-eyed woman, and had been heard to greater effect. Indeed, upon the previous day M. Rochefort had attended the tribune of the Corps Législatif, and protested in the name of the people against the decree ordering for the trial of the noble criminal a Special High Court of Justice composed of Judges notoriously amenable to Imperial influence;—proceeding to draw between Bonapartes and Borgias some extremely uncomplimentary parallels.

The newspaper was seized upon the morning of the interment at Neuilly, and its editor and proprietor served on behalf of the Crown with a writ of prosecution for libel, by the special authorisation of the Corps Législatif. Thus M. Rochefort was rendered too late for the ceremony. But one of the huge crowds of assistant mourners, rolling back upon Paris, encountered him, in a hackney cab on one of the boulevards, and the human torrent surging and eddying about the vehicle, turned it round; and so rolled and roared with it and its occupant in triumph to his home.

The savage faces, the sinister cries, the significant tokens of popular disaffection and incipient revolt affected Mademoiselle Bayard but little, it must be owned. Her dear Parisians were for some reason boiling over. How many times had she not beheld them in a state of ebullition? French blood is easily heated, see you well! A little patience and the people would quiet down.

In the eyes of Juliette and how many other daughters of the Empire, the personality of the stoutish little gentleman with the heavy sallow face, dull regard, spiky moustache

and dyed brown chin-tuft was invested with an aureole of semi-divinity. To her as to her sisters, the Emperor stood for France.

Born nineteen years before in the very month of the Coup d'État of 1851, what should she know of the betrayals, treacheries, crimes that had been so many steps in the ladder leading the man on to success. A tidal wave of human blood had set him upon the throne of St. Louis; the Church, first duped, afterwards to be shorn by him of power, had poured her hallowed oils upon his head; titles, dignities, gold, had streamed from his open hands upon his supporters; the tradition of the Army that had throned him was devotion to his name.

And Juliette was a soldier's daughter. How, then, not reverence the Emperor, from whose ermined purples Field-Marshal's bâtons, Grand Crosses of the Legion of Honour, coveted commands, desired steps, constantly dropped. That the blind, unreasoning support hitherto accorded to him by the Army was weakening,—that 50,000 private soldiers' votes would be recorded against him in the forthcoming *plebiscitum*,—how was a mere girl to conceive of this ?

That her beloved Paris, transformed by him into the gayest and most splendid of European capitals, was tottering on the verge of bankruptcy, she would not have believed. Had she been told that High Finance is too often synonymous with knavish trickery, that those who carry out great civic works may drain treasuries of the national millions—it would have conveyed nothing to her. You cannot talk to a school-girl in the shibboleth of the Bourse.

But one sign of the trend of popular resentment etched itself as by a biting acid on her memory. When the sulky driver of the ramshackle vehicle pulled up in the Avenue of the Champs Élysées, in obedience to the upraised sword-arm and authoritative voice of a lieutenant of mounted Chasseurs, Juliette, thrilling with girlish delight at the sight

of the dear, familiar uniform, let down the window and thrust forth her charming head. And at that moment a party of four equestrians, followed by two grooms in the Imperial livery, came galloping westwards, from the direction of the Pont Royal.

Pray picture to yourself the congested condition of this part of the Avenue, the squadrons blocking its throat, the halted cab, and the lengthy queue of phaetons, Américaines, britzkas, dogcarts, and Victorias, forming up on the left hand of the road to rear of it, containing ladies old and young, pretty or plain, accompanied by the males of their species; whilst nursemaids pushing babies in perambulators, elderly gentlemen out for constitutionals, and other harmless pedestrians, were marshalled on the right, under the surveillance of imperious policemen, who meddled not at all with certain isolated clumps of sombre-looking persons dressed in black; broken links of one of the huge processions of mourners, checked upon their way to the Cemetery at Neuilly.

There was a stir of interest, and every eye was drawn to the little cavalcade, previously mentioned, whose leaders, seeing the barrier of humanity, horseflesh and steel drawn across the thoroughfare, checked their horses and came forwards at a walk. Military Governor was written large upon a double-chinned, stiff-necked, grey-moustached and imperialed personage who bestrode a high-actioned brown charger, and wore the undress uniform of a General of Division of the Service of Engineers. When he leaned to speak in the ear of the slender, brown-haired, blue-eyed boy who rode upon his right hand, you saw in the wearer of the glossy silk topper, the accurately cut, single-breasted black coat and dark gray-strapped trousers—ending in the daintiest of little polished boots, with gold spurs—the heir of the Imperial throne of France.

A cocked-hatted, white-plumed Imperial *aide-de-camp* in blue-and-gold, and a green-and-silver Palace equerry

followed in attendance, succeeded at a respectful distance by two grooms in the livery of the Tuileries; and a troop of the glorious beings known as Cent Gardes came clattering after, balanced to a hair on their shiny, prancing black horses, the long white horse-tails streaming from their polished steel helmets, with tricoloured side-plumes and eagled brass plates, their brass-nutted steel cuirasses reflecting their lacquered moustaches and the adoring glances of enamoured femineity, their sky-blue tunics with the scarlet and golden collars, their golden epaulettes and aguilettes, their gauntletted gloves of white leather, their skin-tight breeches of snowy buckskin—their brilliantly polished boots with huge brass rowelled, steel-spiked spurs, glancing and dancing, clinking and twinkling in the sun.

Ah me! Their morals were doubtful, those moustached and chin-tufted Antinouses of the Guard, as not only giddy work-girls and milliners, but fast variety actresses and frisky ladies of fashion were perfectly aware. But they were splendid, stately, expensive creatures, and so worthy to clatter at Imperial heels.

And so gallant was the youthful figure they attended and guarded; so well-graced the seat upon the spirited English chestnut, so light the boyish hand upon the mare's snaffle-rein, so frank and debonair the smile with which he acknowledged the scanty salutations of a few of the bystanders; that Juliette's heart flew to him with her eyes, and there broke from her in a voice so clear and thrilling that the object of her homage started in his saddle:

"*Vive le Prince! Vive le Prince Impérial!*"

The French are tender to youth and beauty, accessible to sentiment, lovers of Romance. Other voices joined in the cry, hats not ominously furbished with crape were lifted in salutation; a charming dignity was manifested in the boy's reception of these tokens of good-will.

You can conceive the picture, set in the beautiful scenery of the Champs Élysées, to the roll of carriages in the great avenues, the glint of wintry sunshine on still or leaping water, the nip of keen sweet air, perfumed with the scent of damp grass and dead leaves and wood-smoke. Delicate tracery of branches as yet bare, interspersed with the hardy green of pines, laurels, and larches against a sky pale blue as harebell, streaked with broad floating scarves of gray-white vapour, made a background for the green-jacketed, red-breeched Chasseurs on their bony, brown horses,—for the knots of strollers, curious or contemptuous,—for the broken masses of the crowd of would-be demonstrators, arrested in their progress by the blocking of the way. In the right foreground suppose the slim young Napoleon sitting easily on the fidgety, fretful chestnut,—the Military General balanced on his big champing charger,—the blue-and-gold *aide* and the green-and-silver equerry, the grooms and the escort of Cent Gardes looking decorously between the ears of their well-trained, shining beasts. To the left place the debilitated *fiacre* with its weary Rosinante and red-nosed sulky Jehu, and leaning from the open window of the vehicle—Juliette.

Perhaps you can see her, a little toque of Persian lambskin, with a blue wing in it, on her high-piled hair,—with a coquettish jacket of corduroy-velvet of the shade known in the spring of that year as Bismarck gray,—trimmed with the lambskin, fitting close to her slender shape. She wore a plain black silk skirt looped high over a vivid red cloth petticoat—it was a fashionable style of costume that year—and very much worn. A bright rose bloomed in each cheek, pale as she was ordinarily; and her black brows were spread and lifted joyously, and her eyes shone blue as sapphires in contrast with a little knot of violets at her breast and the big bunch held in her little gray-gloved hand. And with a very fair aim she threw the latter so

that the bundle of wet fragrance lightly hit the saddle-flap close to the knee of the Imperial stripling, and behind the shoulder of the swerving chestnut, as she cried again :

" *Vive le Prince Impérial !*"

The boy bowed to her, blushing at her beauty and her loyal enthusiasm,—the equerry, slimmest of the officers in attendance, dismounted and picked up the flowers. A trumpet sounded, a short, sharp order was given, there was a trampling of hoofs and a clinking of bridles as the files wheeled right and left, leaving a broad road open between a double rank of saluting troopers, and the Prince with his Governor and following rode down this open vista and cantered away by route of the Avenue de l'Impératrice, in the direction of the Bois de Boulogne.

The boy held in his whip-hand the bunch of violets handed him by the equerry. Only a little grayish sand clung to some of the dark, shining leaves. He sniffed their fragrance and glanced back as the trumpet rang out behind them, and the Avenue was once more blocked with mounted Chasseurs.

XIX.

He was fourteen, delicate and rather backward for his age, owing to the inevitable drawbacks of his environment. Since the salvo of a hundred-and-one guns announcing the birth of a Prince Imperial had crashed from the battery of the Esplanade of the Invalides, to be echoed from every fortress throughout the Empire; and bells had pealed from every steeple, flags had broached from every staff-head, and dusk-fall had seen every city, town, or village, ablaze with illumination,—had he not been environed with precautions, lapped in luxury? Where another baby would have slumbered in a wicker bassinette, the child of France cried in a cradle of artistic goldsmithery. And the

three great official bodies of the State, and Delegates from all the constituted Authorities paid homage. And they enrolled him in the First Regiment of Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard on the day of his birth, and pinned the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour on his bib when he was forty-eight hours old.

To gratify the paternal ambition of a father who had dreaded the stigma of childlessness, this graft of his race was to be forced into precocious maturity. You might have seen the little creature at six months of age, strapped in a cane chair-saddle upon the back of a Shetland pony. At five he could ride a military charger. Dressed in the white-faced blue uniform of the First Grenadiers of the Guard, his tiny face hidden in a huge fur shako with a white plume and *galons* and a huge brass-eagled fore-plate, you saw him with the Emperor at Imperial Reviews.

It is uncertain whether he was ever soothed to sleep with the French equivalent of the rhyme of Baby Bunting, whether he ever learned of the Archer who shot at a frog, or was thrilled by the adventures of Jack the Giant Killer. We know that the Napoleonic tradition was his ABC, the Third Empire his primer. At the time of the war with Italy, he being then some three years of age, his utterances on the subject were quoted in the daily papers as miracles of wisdom—marvels of acumen. His seventh birthday had been celebrated by the production of a Military Spectacle, in the course of which real cannon were fired and real military evolutions performed upon the stage. His great-uncle on a white horse, in the little cocked hat and gray capote of History, was the hero, you may be sure; and three hundred soldiers' sons of his own age filled the dress circle, stalls and upper tiers. One likes the pretty story of the fair-haired child going down amongst these little comrades to distribute smiles and bonbons. One can understand the father's pride in the laborious pot-

hooks and hangers that compliment him upon the taking of Mexico—word of ill omen in Imperialist ears !—and the scrawled postscript that tells how his horse kicked at exercise that morning, but that he sat tight and did not fall. It was not for a long, long time to dawn upon the expanding mind behind the beautiful, bright blue eyes, that the Throne Imperial of France was a saddle insecurely girthed upon a kicking charger, and that the paternal horsemanship had been, and frequently was severely taxed in the effort to stick on.

You may imagine the query, Why ?—forming in the mind of seven years. Perhaps you see him in his lace-collared, belted blouse and wide Breton breeches of black velvet, scarlet silk stockings and buckled shoes, curled up upon the blue-and-golden cushion of the gilded chair of State upon the three-step daïs in the Throne Room of the Tuileries, where, while their Imperial Majesties dined, he loved to play hide-and-seek with his tutor and an *aide-de-camp* or so; and wearied with play, conceive him dreaming under the gorgeous crimson velvet canopy powdered with golden N's and symbolical bees, edged with laurel leaves of beaten gold, and surmounted by a great golden eagle, perched with outstretched wings upon a laurel Crown.

Under the brooding wings of the Eagle on the Crown this child of the Empire wondered about many things. . . . Did any discovery connected with the peculiar duties devolving upon the Cent Gardes and the Tuileries Police ever make the bright young head toss restlessly on its pillow of down ? For he must one day have learned that noiseless footsteps patrolled the corridors, that observant eyes twinkled at every keyhole—that sharp ears were listening at every chink for suspicious sounds not only by night, for the terror that walketh in the noonday is the peculiar bugbear of Emperors and Kings and Presidents.

One may be very sure that long ere another seven years had browned the fair hair, he was familiar with the fact that the guardian angels of M. Hyrvoix and M. Legrange kept unsleeping watch over the personal safety of his father, his mother, and himself. That officials, functionaries, ladies of the Court, and lackeys, male and female, were maintained under constant and vigilant surveillance. That there were even Police to watch the Police who kept the Police under observation. That precautions of a peculiarly special and delicate nature were observed with regard to the food prepared in the Imperial kitchens and the wine that came from the Imperial cellars, lest deadly poison should be mingled therein by those who did not love the name of Bonaparte.

He learned, next,—perhaps the knowledge floated in the air he breathed like some strange pollen, or was realised from certain experiences garnered during Imperial Progresses, Distributions of Awards, Opening Ceremonies, and other public Functions,—that there were many of these naughty people, who, while the soldiers and certain of the townsfolk in the streets cried "*Vive l'Empereur!*" "*Vive l'Impératrice!*" and "*Vive le Prince Impérial!*" remained silent even though they uncovered, and a vast number who not only did not cheer, but kept their hats on, and sometimes hissed. Following, came the shocking discovery that there existed a party of extremists who were not content with being rude and making ugly noises, but had even tried—and tried more than once—to kill the Emperor. . . .

"*To kill papa, who is so good to me! . . .*"

In a glass case in the Empress's cabinet were preserved the crush-hat and the cloak worn by the Emperor on the night of Orsini's attempt outside the Opera, and damaged by a splinter from one of the exploding bombs. Perhaps

that glass case now yielded up its sinister secret to the curious questionings of a child.

The discovery that this father, so indulgent, so tender, and so much beloved, should be the object of such destroying hate as was cherished by these nameless men, was terrible. You may go farther into the thing, and suppose its breaking in upon him presently that many thousands of his father's subjects, not criminals or murderers, but rather estimable persons than otherwise, thrilled with something else than tenderness at the mention of the paternal name, and that the Empire, which had hitherto signified for him the adamantine hub on which rests the pivot of this spinning world of ours—was not as solidly founded as his pedagogues had taught him. That the Army, the Peasantry, certain of the Nobility—not of the Ancient Régime—and a section of the Bourgeoisie supported it; but that by the educated middle-class, and by the intellectual, professional and working-classes it was held in abomination—execrated and detested; hated with a bitterness that intensified from day to day.

The cat came out of the bag a full-grown tiger. Revelations, discoveries, succeeded one another. Disillusions came crowding thick and fast. When it was discovered that he was backward for his age, and the question of a new private tutor was being discussed, he had asked his Governor:

"Could I not go to a day-school like Corvisart and Fleury and the Labédoyère boys?"

"Impossible, Monseigneur!" was the answer.

He urged:

"But, *mon cher Général,* you answer that to so many questions. Pray, this time explain why?"

Horribly nonplussed, the military governor stammered:

"The heir to an Imperial Throne could not be sent twice daily to a day-school. Not to be dreamed of! Such an

innovation would be the signal for fresh insults, provocation of new perils. . . . Never could it be allowed !"

The boy's were rather dreamy eyes, under the silken plume of hair, chestnut brown like his beautiful mother's. They were proud eyes, too, when they had flashed at the word "insult." And brave, for mention of "perils" only made them smile. He said thoughtfully that morning, leaning his elbow on an unfinished Latin exercise that lay on the table in the window of his study at the Château of St. Cloud:

"An 'innovation' means something that is new. But Primoli and Joachim Murat are being educated at a French College, and did not the late King send his sons to be boarders at the Lycée Henri IV. ? Could not I be a boarder at the Lycée Napoleon, or the Lycée Bonaparte, M. le Général ?"

With laboured clearness and a great deal of circumlocution, M. le Général explained:

"The heir of a Democratic Empire, Monseigneur, and the sons of a bourgeois Royalty cannot be regarded upon the same level, or educated upon identical principles. But a plan has been devised for bringing your Imperial Highness into actual touch with the life of a public school. . . ."

"How ? Tell me quickly, M. le Général !"

The child's delicate face flushed bright red. His eyes shone. He sat upright in his chair as though a vivifying breath had passed through him, waiting the reply. It came. . . .

"One of the Professors of the Elementary Class has been engaged to take your Imperial Highness through the course prescribed for the other pupils. He will attend daily here, or at the Tuileries."

The child said, with a catching of the breath that was almost a sob, and a look of bitter disappointment:

"The boys. . . . Then I shall not know the boys ?"

"No, Monseigneur, except by hearsay. The Professor will tell you their names, ages, and—ah !—leading characteristics. . . . You will learn with them, and every week you will write a composition with them, recapitulating what you have learned. And that they will hear of you goes without saying. Frequently, Monseigneur, but frequently !"

His pupil interrupted:

"They will hear of me, but what is that ? They will never see me—I shall never see them ! Never join in their games—never be just another boy with them ! Never be friends or foes with them—never beat them or be—— No ! I should not like to be beaten at all !"

M. le Général rejoined solemnly:

"That degrading possibility, and graver dangers still, will be averted by the fact that their Imperial schoolfellow will not be—ah !—bodily present in their midst, my Prince. Perhaps your Imperial Highness would like to see the Professor now ?"

And so the Professor came, and from him the boy eagerly gleaned information about his little schoolfellows of the Seventh Form. He had friends of his own who came to him after High Mass on Sundays and on all holidays. But except Espinasse, they had been chosen for him. The joy of selection and choice he was not to know.

Thus, many men of mark from different Lycées succeeded one another in the work-room at the Château and successively occupied the arm-chair at the end of the leather-covered table in one of the three windows of his corner study on the third story of the Pavillon de Flore at the Tuileries—and when he had been attentive and pleased his Professor,—his reward would be to hear about the boys. . . . Some were noble, splendid fellows, full of cleverness, energy and spirits; others were funny by reason of sheer stupidity, or some quaint characteristic or absurd failing which had

gained them nicknames among the rest. A few were spoken of almost with reverence, as being dowered with the magical gift of genius: poets, dramatists, novelists, scientists in embryo, budding naval or military commanders, explorers who were to plant the Flag of France in virgin corners of the earth and proudly add them to the Empire that would one day be his own. . . .

He met his longed-for boys at last. One likes to picture him—having once taken a First Place in the Arithmetic Class—as being permitted to join in the St. Charlemagne fête of the Lycée Bonaparte. He sat in the centre of one of the long tables, with long vistas of boys, boys, boys opening out before him whichever way he turned his head. And he was happy, but for this thing; that though most of the boys in whom he had been particularly interested were presented to him, he did not find—as secretly he hoped to find—the friend of whom he dreamed. . . .

He tried to be *bon camarade ;* to combine—and he had a special gift in this—easy good-fellowship with graciousness. But the boys did not respond as he would have liked. They stood to attention, and looked him in the face, and answered, "Yes, Monseigneur! No, Monseigneur!" boldly, or they shuffled and blinked, and answered, "No, Monseigneur! Yes, Monseigneur!" mumblingly, and that was all.

He wished, secretly yet ardently, for brave, proud eyes to meet his own, and strike out the sacred spark of chaste and mutual fire that kindles the pure, undying flame of Friendship's altar. He longed for a grave, melodious voice to match the noble, youthful face and the fine form of his chosen friend. He sought a nature to lean upon, which should be stronger, greater, than his own. . . . Superior talents, greater capacities, ambitions to share, successes to emulate. And he found none. Not a boy here was a patch upon the shoe of gay, gallant, lovable, merry

Espinasse, who had never come up to his Prince's notion of a bosom-friend. Could it be that the other self did not exist anywhere? We turned from that thought, we who were lonely when we were young. It made the world feel so big and cold.

The Fête of St. Charlemagne having passed off without any untoward incident or disagreeable demonstration, an unhappy inspiration on the part of M. Victor Duruy prompted the suggestion that the Emperor's heir should preside at the distribution of prizes for the Concours Général, and thus be for the second time brought into sympathetic touch with the intellectual youth of France.

You are to imagine the picture of the stately entry into the great Hall upon the first-floor of the Sorbonne upon an evening in mid-August; the reception by the Minister of Public Instruction, gowned and capped and hooded, and the Representatives of the Faculties; the ominously restricted and frigid applause of professors and students, greeting references made in the Rector's Latin speech to the presence of an Imperial Prince in the classic groves of Akademos.

Hostility, hidden behind a mask of frigid indifference, was to dash down the brittle sham, and show the fierce eyes of scorn and the livid hue of hatred, and the writhed lips dumb with reproaches unutterable. Contempt and mockery were to be conveyed in the small sibilant *s'ss!* that rippled from parterre to gallery, and by the intolerable jeering titter that replied.

Yet all might have passed off tolerably but for the beldam Fate, who had arranged that the second prize for Greek translation, a trio of calf-bound, gilt-backed volumes containing the Works of Thucydides, had—together with a laurel crown—fallen to Louis-Eugene Cavaignac.

The young voice had not faltered in reading the name upon the illuminated scroll. What did its owner know of the Revolutionary soldier, the dauntless foe of Abd-el-Kader? The Governor-General of Algeria who had been recalled to Paris to assume the functions of Minister at War to the Republican Government of 1848. The man who had upheld the office of Dictator during the period of terror that had followed the fatal days of June! The candidate for the Presidency of the Republic who had scorned to bribe; who had calmly accepted his defeat, and taken his place in the National Assembly, when Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, the good citizen, was elected to the arm-chair upon the tribune, and took the oath of fidelity to the Republic of France. Who had been imprisoned in the Fortress of Ham, with other Representatives of the Left,—his gaoler a commandant named Baudot, whom he himself had appointed in '48,—his guards the 40th Regiment of the Line, which had been subject to his orders so short a time before.

Of his seven fellow-captives between those grim and oozing walls, one was paralysed upon release, others were victims to chronic rheumatism. Cavaignac had lived in retirement until the elections of June, 1857, when he was chosen as one of the Deputies for the Seine, in opposition to an Imperialist candidate. A few weeks later he had died suddenly, leaving a wife and a son of three years old.

This son, who had half-risen from his place upon the bench at the sound of the voice that called upon him in the name that had been his father's, had all these memories in his flaming eyes. He did not seem to hear the applause that greeted his triumph; he gazed steadily into the face of the young Bonaparte, and then looked towards his mother. And Madame Cavaignac, seated, beautiful and stern as a matron of old Rome, relentless as Fate, in the

front of the gallery opposite, signed to him with an imperious gesture to sit down. He obeyed her. And then round upon round of deafening plaudits made the walls and rafters of the ancient building shake; and brought the gray dust of six centuries drifting down upon the black or brown or golden locks of the hopeful youth of France.

After that episode the heir of the Imperial dignities was not again brought in contact with the students of the lyceums. He made no reference to the prize-winner who had refused the prize tendered by the son of his dead father's relentless enemy. But the insult had gone to the quick. Recalling it, he would clench his hands until the nails dug deep into the delicate flesh, crying inwardly: "Oh! to be a man full-grown, and avenge that day with blood!"

At other times he would weep passionately in secret over the memory of the outrage; for, being of a sensitive, affectionate and generous nature, it sorely hurt to find himself the object of such hatred from one in whom,—it seemed to him, and perhaps indeed it was so!—he might have found the bosom friend and *alter ego*, so keenly longed for and so eagerly sought.

The bright dark eyes and clear-cut features, the well-set head and athletic form, the dignified, yet modest bearing of this boy, so superior to himself in everything but wealth and station, fitted the niche previously prepared. And when he fell to dreaming, young Cavaignac's resolute face and calm, contemptuous bearing were invariably opposed to his own unslumbering resentment, and finally-conquering generosity. For, varied as the plot might be, the *dénouement* of each little drama would always be the same.

They would meet, in manhood, upon some field of bloody battle, during the great war beginning with the French invasion of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, ending with the conquest of Germany and the annexation of the left bank of the Rhine. A youth upon the verge of manhood,

the dreamer would have performed such prodigies of valour in command of his regiment as to justify his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army of Invasion. He had not decided what would happen. There would be a great charge of cavalry led against overwhelming odds, under a deadly fire of infantry and artillery, by himself. He would cut down or shoot a gigantic Prussian trooper who had wounded a French officer. He would lightly leap from his own charger—the Arab "*Selim*" given him by Sultan Abdul Aziz—and aid the prostrate man to rise and mount. Their looks would meet, the blue-gray and the fiery black eyes would strike out a spark of mutual recognition. Oh! the joy of heaping coals of fire upon that beautiful, rebellious head!

Or Cavaignac would not then recognise his saviour, but long afterwards, the Prince having become Emperor, would head a conspiracy to dethrone him. Moving, as would be the wont of the Fourth Napoleon, in disguise through the public places of his capital, mingling with every rank and class, a mystery to men, an enigma to women, worshipped by all, known by none; he would have discovered the plot and laid a counter-plot, which, of course, would be successful. The mine would explode harmlessly—the conspirators would be seized. Their leader,—lying under sentence of death in a military fortress—probably Mont Valerien—bedded upon damp straw, loaded with massive fetters, would be visited by a young officer. He would recall the features of his deliverer of long ago, and fall upon his neck, crying: "Alas! my noble friend, long sought, unfound till now, thou comest late, but in time, for I am to die to-morrow!" "Die! Is it possible! Of what art thou guilty, then?" Cavaignac would answer coldly: "Of having conspired to dethrone the young Emperor!" "Dost thou indeed hate him so?" "Ay! we have been enemies since boyhood's

days." Choking with emotion, dissembled under a pale and resolute exterior, the visitor would return: "Yet he hates thee not! Were he here he would say as much to thee!" "Can it be possible? How, then——?" "I swear it upon the soul of my father! Thy Emperor is thy truest friend! Here is my sword. Behold this undefended breast, cage of a heart that has ever loved thee! Thrust, I command thee, if thou hast the power!" "Sire, I am conquered; I have lived for a Republic—I die the Emperor's most loyal subject!" "To my arms, then, Cavaignac! Embrace me—thou art forgiven!"

Impossible, beautiful dreams, grandiose and absurd, ridiculous and touching. . . .

He was mentally carrying on one of these endless duologues as he rode through the wintry avenues of the Bois, and dismounted at my Lord Hertford's exquisite villa of Bagatelle, set in beautiful, secluded grounds adjoining the park.

Born of a whim of the Comte d'Artois, gay Monsieur, brother of the Sixteenth Louis, built in fifty-four days by the architect Bellanger, at a cost of six hundred thousand livres, Bagatelle had always served as a shelter for gallant adventures, not all of them set in what Republicans scornfully termed "the night of monarchy."

Mademoiselle de Charolais, beautiful and haughty; Mademoiselle de Beauharnais, handsome, sensual, and unscrupulous; Madame Tallien, constant, noble, and courageous; the Duchesse de Berri, and how many other women, famous or infamous, had trodden its velvet lawns and swept over its floors of rare marquetry or its pavements of mosaic? The blood of the Beauharnais mingled in this boy's own veins, with the Corsican and Spanish tides and the dash of canny Scots derived from distant Kirkpatricks. That Celtic strain was responsible, it may be, for his dreaminess and love of solitude.

He was dreaming as he rode through the forest; the spell of his dream was still upon him as he turned his Arab in at the gilded gates of Bagatelle, and dismounted before its portico, in the shadow of the Gothic tower.

From childhood many of the happiest hours of this son of the Empire had been spent at Bagatelle. In its labyrinths of myrtle and oleander, laurel and syringa, he had hidden, bursting with childish laughter, when his playmates were seeking him; he had galloped his Shetland pony and raced with his dogs over its green lawns. Upon its broad sheets of crystal water he had sailed his miniature yacht-squadrons. At his entreaty, the Emperor, always an indulgent father, had endeavoured to buy the place from its English owner. In vain! my lord of Hertford was not to be tempted by gold, possessing so much of the stuff, or allured by rank, who was a premier English Marquess, Knight of the Garter, and so forth. Yet he was a generous nobleman, and made the Imperial urchin free of his coveted fairyland whenever he, the owner of the place, should be from home.

To-day's dream, for a wonder, was not the usual duologue between the friend and the unfriend. Albeit innocently, it was tinged by sex, it assumed the shape of the triangle; and worked out, though, to the satisfaction of the dreamer, the eternal Rule of Three. Louis and his dear enemy, men grown, madly loved one woman; a bewitching creature, with a sparkling rose-flushed face, eyes like blue jewels under a pile of black hair, crowned with a little cap of velvet and gray fur, with a blue wing set at the side. She adored the Prince who had won her love in the disguise of a simple officer. Fortified by this passion, she could hear Cavaignac plead unmoved. He, driven to frenzy by jealousy, would conceal himself here, for the Imperial lover would have settled Bagatelle with all its treasures upon his lady-love!—and at midnight

when a step echoed in the gallery of arms, and the fair one, reclining upon this very fauteuil in the window commanding the grass-plot centred by the Cellini fountain,—sprang up with a cry of joy to welcome her lover,—the rejected aspirant would leap from behind yonder trophy of sixteenth-century pageant-shields, topped with the magnificent embossed and damascened one bearing the monogram and insignia of Diane de Poitiers; and, seizing yonder rapier from its stand, would challenge his successful rival there and then, to a duel *à outrance*.

Need it be said that the Prince's well-known mastery of the sword would enable him,—by a lightning *coup*, following a feint—to disarm his antagonist; upon whom he would finally bestow not only the lady, but the villa, with its treasures of paintings by ancient and modern masters, its marvellous miniatures and enamels, its rooms of porcelain, cabinets of priceless coins and gems, galleries of antique sculpture, its costly furniture, its matchless grounds and gardens, ending a great many nobly-turned sentences with the dignified peroration:

"Take her, Cavaignac, with all these riches! I ask nothing in return, but your esteem!"

XX.

Could Juliette have known how she had been disposed of in a boy's imagination, perhaps the Spanish Infanta would have replaced the rosy nymph. But while her Prince dreamed, her jingling vehicle had crossed the Port de St. Cloud, and so by Ville d'Avray up the long avenue between the breasting woods, stately and glorious still, though stripped by the blasts of January, to the clean white town that had sprung up, nearly three hundred years before (upon the site of a little village patronised

by waggoners), where an ancient feudal castle stood on a plateau surrounded by lake, forest, and marsh.

A touch of a King's sceptre changed this ancient castle to a Royal Hunting-Lodge, a whim of his successor transformed the humbler dwelling to a Palace. Courtiers, officials, functionaries, guards, valets, lackeys, pimps, cooks, barbers and innumerable hangers-on, are necessary to the upkeep of State; and these must be housed in stately fashion. Behold whole streets of buildings, with noble avenues, radiating like the sticks of a fan from the sunlike centre, uprising like fungi from the swampy soil. Behold, as the power and glory of the monarch redoubled,—no less than thirty thousand workmen engaged in enlarging and beautifying the residence of His Majesty, while a regiment of Swiss Guards dig out the lake. And when pneumonia, fever, and ague carry off so many thousands of these hapless toilers, that the dead have to be carted away by night, and secretly dumped into pits dug for the purpose, and the bottoms of the Royal coffers are seen through a thinning layer of gold, and the Building Accounts of the Crown Demesne show totals of unpaid debts sufficiently colossal to stagger a lightning-calculator, and Ministers grow dizzy, seeing a Kingdom on the brink of financial ruin, the sublime forehead beneath the bediamonded hat and the towering wig is illuminated by an inspiration. "Ha! We have it! Quick! commence new works! Pile on the national taxes, press a million unpaid labourers into the Royal service. Let rivers of tears flow to swell the sources of our dwindling fountains. Upon the uncounted corpses of vulgar toilers erect fresh monuments to all the glories of France!"

No ghastly visions disturbed the royal dreams, no awful Finger wrote the dreadful sentence upon the marble friezes of his banqueting-halls. The shadow of the little cocked hat that was to overtop his tallest wig by the whole

height of a Crown Imperial was never shown him in Witch Montespan's magic mirror. The bees that were to swarm over his lilies and drain their golden honey were not to be hatched for many years yet. He deemed himself immortal in spite of the twinges of the gout, until it took him in the stomach and carried him off, at seventy-seven, leaving France to shudder in the embraces of a far worse man than himself. Until aphrodisiacs and apoplexy having made an end of the infamous Regent, and Louis the Well-Beloved having succumbed to vice and smallpox, and the Red Widow having hugged the heads off Louis the Locksmith and his fair young Queen, the Terror ushered in the Revolution, Era of Liberty, Equality, and Universal Phlebotomy; until men, wearied of serving many masters, looked about for one to lead them, and the Little Corporal with the pale hatchet-face and the inscrutable gray-blue eyes under the great marble forehead rose up and said, "*Here am I!*"

The Court of his nephew was just now at the Tuileries. You saw the town of Versailles in its winter slumber, undisturbed by the roll of innumerable carriages, luggage *fourgons,* pastrycooks and tradesmen's vans, and other vehicles, over its historic and venerable cobblestones. . . Fashionable people lived there all the year round; many of the crack regiments of the Imperial Guard were quartered in the innumerable barracks; there was no lack of society—not the cream of the cream, perhaps, but charming, lively and gay.

The 777th Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard were garrisoned in that antique quarter of barracks and churches, convents and Royal harems, once known as the Parc aux Cerfs. South of the great central avenue leading from the Place d'Armes to Paris, you found its huge monumental entrance on the right of the Rue de l'Orangerie, once the Hotel of the Gardes du Corps du Roi.

It boasted a frontage at once chaste and imposing. The high window of the mess-room, balconied and dominated by a lofty pediment, surmounted the great gates of wrought-iron rolling back upon a wide sanded courtyard. If I do not err, the quarters of M. le Colonel were upon the second-floor upon the left-hand side of the gate, immediately above a confectioner's, whence rose delicious odours of baking pastry and simmering chocolate to titillate the nostrils of Mademoiselle. The sleeping-chamber and boudoir, described in the Colonel's letter as hung with rosebud chintz, and elegantly furnished; the little kitchen on the same floor, full of pots and bright pans, scoured by the Colonel's soldier-servant into dazzling brilliancy, more than fulfilled the expectations provoked beforehand. I rather think that the dinner—an inexpensive and savoury little meal, consisting of vegetable soup with fillets of sole Normande, an infinitesimal steak *jardinière,* an omelette *soufflée,* Brie cheese (nowhere upon earth does one get such Brie as at Versailles), and dessert—had come from the pastrycook's on the street-floor. After the cooking one got at the Convent, and in default of the much better dinner Mademoiselle could have evolved out of similar materials, it was a meal for demi-gods. And you do not know Juliette if you imagine she did not dispose of her share.

"I am *gourmande,* me," she would assure her confidantes in all sincerity, fitting the tip of a slender finger into a dint that would have needed slight persuasion to become a dimple. "I love good dishes, or how should I be able to cook them? One of these days it is possible that I may even grow fat. Believe me, I am not joking. Already I perceive the beginning of a double chin!"

M. le Colonel had excused himself from attendance at Mess that he might dine with his daughter. Both Monsieur and Mademoiselle were prodigiously gay, you may conceive. But even while Juliette laughed and clapped her little hands

in delight at the paternal witticisms, while she leaned upon her Colonel's shoulder, or sat upon the arm of his chair; while her slender arm twined round his neck, and her cheek, no longer ivory-pale, but painted by the delicate brush of the artist Joy with the loveliest rose-flush, was tickled by the waxed end of his martial moustachio, the hateful shadow of the faceless Charles rose up and thrust itself between. It blotted out the last rays of the red wintry sun, it sprawled across the shade of the Argand lamp. It was heavy though impalpable, and diffused a numbing chill throughout the little apartment.

Perhaps the father felt it, for as they sat together talking by the cheerful fire of crackling beech-billets that burned upon the open hearth, he gradually fell silent.

You can see him in his undress uniform jacket of green cloth, braided, frogged, and with fur edging, unhooked at the neck and showing the white shirt, stiff linen collar, and scarlet tie. His polished boots and bright spurs, buttons, buckles, and so forth, reflected the dancing firelight. His forage-cap, a head-dress gaudy and bizarre enough to have come out of a Christmas cracker, crowned a porcelain bust of a young negress, chocolate-hued, with purplish-crimson lips, pink protruding tongue, and rolling onyx eyes (an art-object left behind as too fragile for transport by the previous occupant of the quarters)—whilst his long sabre leaned against her wooden pedestal.

His handsome face was very grave, almost sombre, as he pulled his crisp imperial, and stared at the little dancing hearth-flames, forgetful of the excellent cigar burning itself away to ash between the first and second fingers of his well-kept right hand. The other hand sometimes rested on his knee, sometimes touched his daughter's hair; for Juliette had slipped from her previous seat to the carpet, where she sat leaning against him.

And all at once the chill barrier of reserve broke down.

It was when a heavy tear splashed upon the hand that rested on the knee of the crimson overall, a strong, brown, manly hand, rather hairy on the back. It clenched as though the single drop had been of molten metal, and then Juliette caught it in both her own and spoke:

"Oh, my father, why must this marriage take place? We have not said one word, but I know well that what is in my mind is in yours also. Feel!"—she drew the prisoned hand closely to her—"here lies your letter over where my heart is beating so. Much of it I comprehend, but the rest is anguish—mystery! War is threatened—that at least is clear. The regiment will sooner or later be ordered on active service. And—were your daughter the wife of a gentleman of her father's profession, you fear that she might suffer as her grandmother—as her own beloved dead mother did. But though my grandmother lost her husband, War spared her son. You returned to her and to my mother, not even wounded, darling! And if you apprehend for me a lot less fortunate, why need I marry anyone? Take me with you or leave me behind, I am your obedient daughter always—always! But I had rather you would take me, dear!"

Not trusting himself to speak, the father took the little head between his palms and kissed the blue-veined temples and the clear space between the wide-arched eyebrows. The candid eyes met his, that were cloudy and troubled. He searched for phrases to disguise a truth that must stab.

"If I met death upon the field, you by my side, you would be left alone and unprotected. Were I to leave you behind even in the care of Madame Tessier, you would none the less be alone. There is safety in permanent ties; but only when her husband is by her side does the sacrament of marriage open a haven to a young girl where the libertine and the seducer dare not enter. I speak with certainty—only when her husband is by her side!"

So women were not to be trusted! . . . His palms might have been burned had he not withdrawn them, so fiery the sudden blush that rose in the clear, pale cheeks.

Barely comprehending his meaning, she faltered:

"Yet my grandmother——"

The Colonel broke in hastily:

"My mother was a Saint! What I have said does not apply to her!"

"And my mother?"

Something like a groan broke from the man. She felt him wince and shudder as she leaned upon him, saw the strong square teeth of the upper-jaw nip the ruddy lower lip, noted the ashen grayness that replaced the ebbed colour, and the points of moisture that broke out upon his temples where his rich black hair was frosted with white. And looking, she bleached and shuddered in sympathy. His haunted eyes and haggard face bent over an upturned white mask, that had little of the grace of girlhood left in it. The distended pupils encroached upon the blue until her eyes seemed inky-black. He would have withdrawn the hand she held in both hers, but the soft little fingers turned to living steel, and he could not free himself. And the blue-black eyes staring out of the pinched elfin face, quested in search of something that his own eyes strove to hide. As though his had been the weaker nature and hers the stronger (impossible, the creature being feminine), he felt his loathed secret being relentlessly drawn to light. The clear, unshaken question:

"Was not my mother good?" compelled him to truthful utterance. He heard a voice unlike his own replying:

"At the beginning—yes! I would stake my soul upon it. But during the war in the Crimea, when the Allies watered with the best blood of France and England that fatal soil, her loyalty to the absent husband weakened—her heart strayed!" He struck himself upon the breast

passionately. "Yet here beat a heart that would have throbbed for love in death, had her lips kissed the shape of icy clay that housed it. It burns now with shame that I must strip off the veil of secrecy that until this moment has hidden from thee thy mother's sin!"

The head bent, a swift kiss touched his hand. Her mouth felt very cold. He went on, realising that she demanded it:

"She fled with her lover upon the very day of the re-entry of the Army into Paris. After the triumph I hastened to Auteuil, where she and her child were living with my mother. That sainted soul met me at the door—the first glimpse of her face told of terrible intelligence. Had other lips than those beloved ones stabbed me with the truth, that night my revolver would have ended it!—I would not have lived to endure the pity in the faces of the friends who loved me—the curiosity in strangers' eyes."

A deep sigh stirred her, quickening in him the knowledge that since she had kissed his hand she had listened without breathing. She murmured now:

"Poor, dearest, best father! How old was I when she——"

He said tenderly:

"Let me see . . . it was the August of 1856; thou hadst five years, and thy curls were as soft and as yellow as chicken-down. Thy mother used to say, *Juliette will never be black like me!*"

That disloyal mother had been the darkest of brunettes, ivory-skinned, and ebon-haired, with eyes of tawny wine-colour, and the tall, lithe, exuberant form of a goddess of Grecian myth. To question the man she had deserted with regard to his betrayer seemed hideous, and yet . . . Juliette strung herself to the effort, faltering:

"And for whom . . . ? with whom . . . ? Do not tell me if it costs thee too much!"

His comprehension was instant. Very coldly the answer came:

"He was a personage of rank in his own country. A military attaché of the Prussian Embassy in Paris. They had met at one of the Imperial receptions at the Tuileries."

"*Is he alive?*"

The whispered words might have been shrieked in his ear, such a leap of the heart and such a thrilling of the nerves responded. He rose to his feet and said sternly, not looking at his daughter, but directly at the wall before him:

"The man is dead! But he did not fall in a duel. He lived to meet his end during the Prusso-Austrian War. He had left Paris *en route* for Berlin when my representative called at the Prussian Embassy. Strive as I would, I could gain no answer from him. Nor might the utmost influence I could command obtain a response to my *cartel*. This being so, the disgrace is his—not mine!"

He grew quite tall in saying this, so dignified was the little tubby man, so noble in his soldierly simplicity. His daughter looked up at him, wondering at him, loving him, sorrowing over him; yet yearning to hear more of that beloved, faithless one who had dealt those bleeding wounds he now bared in the sight of the child she had deserted, and ploughed such deep lines in his wrung and suffering face. The words would break out, though she nipped her lips to stop them:

"And my mother . . . did she repent and ask your pardon. Did you not forgive her before she died?"

"She did not die!"

The little Colonel had a great voice. His "*Garde à vous!*" roared down the files like a spherical mortar-shell, his "*Chargez!*" might have set dead men and horses up and galloping. Indeed, his nickname among the troopers of his regiment was, I believe, nothing less than "*Bouche*

a feu!" When he thundered the answer to Juliette's question, not only did Mademoiselle Bayard leap to her feet, vibrating in every fibre of her slender, rigid body, but the crystal drops of the mantelshelf chandeliers left by the previous tenant danced and tinkled, and the panes of the windows rattled in their frames. What more the Colonel might have said was drowned, as the customary fanfare of trumpets sounded from the Mess, heralding the loyal toast. Then the "Vive l'Empereur!" rang out, and the regimental band crashed into "*Partant Pour La Syrie,*" and very soon afterwards, from the uncurtained window commanding the barrack-square, lights could be seen moving across the shadowy space as the dispersing officers returned to their quarters or went about their duty, attended by orderlies carrying stable-lanterns of the smoky, smelly, tallow-burning kind. The Colonel's own duty called him elsewhere, and he was glad of it. He muttered an inaudible word, his eyes averted from his daughter; took his cap, gloves, and riding-whip, and strode jingling from the room.

Ah, it would need a great artist in words to depict the swift and changing emotions that swelled and wrung the heart of the poor girl he left behind him, and give some adequate idea of the storm that swept over her in that lonely hour. Joy at the discovery that the adored mother of her childish memories yet lived, was drowned in anguish at the piercing thought, "*She lives, but not for me!*" Shame burned her cheeks to crimson, grief washed them white again; her heart bounded in her bosom, or sank, heavy as lead. Except Madame Suchard, the soldier's wife who had been engaged to wait upon Mademoiselle de Bayard, and who now might be heard washing up the dinner-plates and dishes in the little kitchen, there was no earthly woman near to whom she might turn for comfort in this her hour of need.

But as she wept, not the freely-flowing tears of girlhood, but with the dry sobbings and painful convulsions that tortured women know, there chimed from the great cathedral Church of St. Louis close by, the first long triple of the Angelus, echoed by the thinner-sounding bells from the Convent of the Augustinian Sisters, from the Priory of the Bernardine Fathers, from the House of the Sœurs de l'Esperance, from the House of the Little Sisters of the Poor. Mechanically Juliette's hand went to her bosom, her pale lips moved, shaping the sacred words. And then she went to her room, and knelt at the little straw-bottomed *prie-Dieu* that stood before her Crucifix, and prayed with passionate earnestness that He Who when hanging upon His Cross of Agony gave His Mother to be our Mother, would hear Her pure prayer of intercession for that mother who had deserted her child. Wherever she might be, however low she might have fallen, whatever the sins, vices, follies that yet environed her, held her back or dragged her down, the ray of Divine Grace had power to reach her, raise her up, and lead her back by the path of Penance into the Way of Peace.

And pending the miracle, towards which end Masses should be offered and Communions given; obedience to that father so cruelly betrayed, so bitterly wronged, must more than ever, be the watchword of Juliette. For the conviction began to dawn in her that belief in the innate purity and truth of her sex having been destroyed in him by the unfaith of that most beloved, most unhappy one, he sought to safeguard her daughter's virtue by means of a husband, who, being the only son of a widow, and therefore exempt from the obligations of military service, must always be on the spot. Sorrowfully she sought her bed, to remember, the moment her head touched the pillow, that although she had mustered courage to plead against the Colonel's sentence of marriage, provoking him

thereby to reveal the long-hidden secret of his betrayal, she had never mentioned Charles except by inference.

What was he like, this young man, pious, virtuous, devoted to his mother, energetic, frugal, a manufacturer of, and merchant in, the commodity of woollen cloth ? Could one build a husband out of such materials ? Was it possible ?

She tried once more. The effort led to tossing and turning. Conscience is most active in the night-watches. Juliette's bosom-monitor reproached her with having boasted to dear Monica's untidy brother, of the faceless Charles's mastery of the art of fence. Other lapses from the strict line of veracity had preceded and followed. She had told one curious girl that Charles owned the form of an athlete, and hair of ruddy chestnut; another had reaped the information that he possessed a profile resembling that of Edgar Ravenswood, with dark, melancholy eyes, and a jet-black moustache of the kind that is silky and sweeps. Yet another eager inquirer had elicited the information that Charles was quite a duodecimo edition of a lover, slender, brilliantly fair, and not much taller than the bride-elect. Should it occur to these girls to compare notes in some hour of recess or exercise, what would be the impression conveyed to the Great Class ?

One had left School, however, and one was glad of it. To go back with that tragic secret locked in one's bosom, and mingle with fortunate girls whose mothers were good women, happily alive or safely in Paradise, how could one have borne that ?

A well-known footstep outside the door of her room, which opened from the little salon, and a gentle rustling sent a shiver through her. When the step moved away with its soldierly jingle of spurs accompanying it, De Bayard's daughter sat up in bed and kissed both hands

to him, passionately; stretching out her arms with a wide gesture as though something of the maternal mingled with her love for him now. . . . When "Lights Out" sounded, and the gas was extinguished, and no line of yellow showed under the door, and the footsteps retreated and his door shut upon them, Juliette crept out of bed, lighted the candle, and picked up the scrap of paper that had been pushed across her threshold by the strong, beloved hand.

It proved to be a note dated that day, and addressed from the Tessier's house in the Rue de Provence, in Madame's angular, spidery caligraphy. Felicitations to her dear friend on the safe return of his cherished one were followed by regrets. "My Charles, alas! will be detained in Belgium at least until the Mardigras. The meeting of these dear young people must necessarily be deferred until that date. But to-morrow being the Feast of Saint Polycarpe, possibly M. le Colonel would bring Mademoiselle to visit a friend, old and most affectionate, punctually at the hour of one *midi ?*" With tender remembrances the note concluded. Beneath the signature—Marie-Anastasie Tessier—M. le Colonel had scrawled in pencil the curt intimation: "Arranged.—H. A. A. de B."

Knowing Charles safely bestowed in Belgium, Juliette sank back upon her pillow, and soon was calmly sleeping between her two great hair-plaits. But slippered footsteps patrolled the Colonel's room until gray dawn showed between the slits of the window-shutters, and the heavy sighs and muttered words that broke from him would have wrung his daughter's faithful heart. Sleepless and haggard, the first pale beams of January daylight found him still pacing the brown-striped drugget, a letter—the cause of his own and another's misery,—crushed in his strong right hand.

"555, Avenue de l'Alma, Paris,
"*December* 18, 1869.

"Monsieur,

"Acting upon instructions received from the senior partner of the Berlin branch of our firm, we beg to acknowledge your reply to his communication of the 7th instant, and must point out to you that the attitude you assume with regard to our client is equally unjust and indefensible. No legal remedy was sought by you for the injuries you allege that you sustained through the infidelity of the lady who until the autumn of 1856 occupied—and without reproach—the position of your wife.

"Further, during the years of her absence from your side, she has neither asked or received from you any monetary payments towards her support and maintenance, facts which certainly appear to suggest consent and knowledge upon your part. You may further be aware that His deceased Excellency, Count Maximilian von Schön-Valverden, late junior military *attaché* to the Prussian General Staff, fully atoned for an indiscretion of his earlier years, by making an ample settlement upon Madame de Bayard; and that she is now in a position to render liberal assistance to relatives whom Fortune has not dowered with ample means.

"Under the circumstances, we have advised our client, whose natural affection for her daughter strongly urges her to assert her maternal rights to the society of Mademoiselle de Bayard, to enforce her claim by the re-establishment of personal influence.

"The young lady in question is still unmarried, under age, and therefore subject to maternal authority; and our client does not disguise her hope that by awakening the long silent chords of filial tenderness, she may gain a powerful advocate upon the side of reconciliation, reunion, and

that unblemished and peaceful happiness which is only to be found by the domestic fireside.

"Recollect, Monsieur, that no legal bar exists to this most virtuous and irreproachable aspiration. And understand that unless a favourable answer is shortly received by our firm to the application now made by us to you on behalf of our client, her next appeal will be made to your daughter and hers.

"We remain, etc.,

"WIEGELT, NADIER AND BIDUQUET,

"*Solicitors.*"

By the chill light of the new day the Colonel for the twentieth time re-read the letter, and its cunning mixture of truth and falsehood, the venomed hint at knowledge and complicity, struck fangs once more into his quivering heart.

A devout Catholic, he had never sought to divorce the wife who had betrayed him. Thus a civil marriage with her paramour had been rendered impossible to Adelaide, even had the Count desired it. Now, furnished with ample means by the generosity of her dead lover, did the false wife seek at the hands of the injured husband rehabilitation, in return for a heap of tainted gold ?

Horrible thought ! The walls of the room seemed to close upon de Bayard suffocatingly. He opened the window and leaned out, drawing in deep draughts of the frosty morning air. It cleared his brain; he realised in the event of his contemptuous rejection of the hideous bargain, a menace to his daughter's peace of mind.

Motherhood is of all earthly relationships the most sacred. Yet there are mothers who in revenge for disappointed hopes and thwarted ambitions have not hesitated to strike, through their own offspring, at husbands abhorred. More than ever the husband of Ade-

laide bent to his determination of placing Juliette, at the earliest moment, safe out of reach of that spotted maternal embrace.

XXI.

Upon the following afternoon the Colonel duly escorted Mademoiselle to the dwelling of Madame Tessier. You may conceive that the portly little warrior, when panoplied in the full-skirted, black frock-coat, gray peg-top trousers, black cravat and vest, and curly-brimmed silk chimney-pot of private life, looked a very gallant gentleman; and that his daughter, attired in a new and charming costume of fine blue cloth, trimmed with velvet and loops of black silk cord, and wearing a sealskin coat and a minute bonnet, consisting of a knot or two of blue velvet, a froth of lace, and half-a-dozen richly-tinted oak-leaves, on her coils of black hair, conveyed an effect of elegant simplicity and youthful grace, such as only a well-bred French girl knows how to combine perfectly.

During the walk, which absorbed the best part of a quarter of an hour, Juliette occupied herself in the endeavour to glean a few meagre items of information with regard to her destined husband. To her timidly-cast bait the Colonel barely vouchsafed a rise. One may imagine a dialogue of timid interrogations and baffling replies, running somewhat after this fashion:

"Dear father, upon reflection, I find myself unable to recall the features of M. Charles Tessier with anything approaching clearness. I pray you be kind enough to describe him to me?"

"My daughter, I myself experience—how shall I phrase it?—a difficulty in verbally portraying the form and features of that excellent young man. But his mother

carries his image in her heart, and doubtless has it on her walls and in her albums. Look in the one before you search the others; it will be wise."

"Assuredly. But, my father——"

"Chut!" The Colonel twirled a waxed end of his magnificent moustache, and resumed presently: "M. Charles Tessier is a gentleman of honour, an excellent man of business, and a most desirable *parti* for any young girl of good family and limited fortune. Could the most exacting bride-elect demand more than this? In addition, he has a fine hand——"

"Indeed, dear father——"

A fine hand was something tangible. The owner of the commended extremity might in addition be possessor of a good figure, broad shoulders, a handsome nose. . . . And yet hunchbacks occasionally have neat hands, and the Colonel had only testified to one. That idea might be dismissed as fanciful. Of course, Charles had the proper complement of legs and arms. Half-smiling at her own terrors, Juliette murmured:

"Pray go on, dear father! You said—a fine hand . . ."

"Hah—aha! yes. A fine hand for a stroke at billiards. In addition, it cannot be denied that Charles has a magnificent head——"

"I am listening, dear father! . . ."

"A truly magnificent head for figures! Book-keeping by double-entry is infant's play to this admirable young man. He must teach thee the logarithms, my child, when thou art married. . . . Docile and intelligent as thou art, thou wouldst quickly learn to be his secretary and head-clerk. It should be a true wife's ambition to help her husband in business, and this is alone possible when his avocations are of the strictly civil kind."

It was tragic. In her dreams Juliette Bayard had aided to put on the casque, and buckle the cuirass of a stately

warrior. Now she must perforce mend the gray goose-quill of a knight of the counting-house. You might have seen how her slender throat swelled against the encircling band of velvet. Tears sprang to her eyes. To keep them back she bit her lip, straightened her back, and shrugged,—one barely perceptible shrug. The Colonel said,—was his kind glance a little troubled as it turned on her ?—

"The letter of Madame Tessier has made it clear to thee, that although thou wilt see thy future husband soon, the meeting will not take place upon the present occasion. Since October M. Charles Tessier"—the Colonel twisted his moustache—"has been detained by affairs at Mons-sur-Trouille in Belgium. I understand that at this country hamlet—near the town of Mons—is situated the manufactory of his partner, M.—the name for the moment escapes me. He is a wealthy gentleman of excellent Flemish family. The daughter, I remember, was called Clémence or Clémentine."

The Colonel cleared his throat. Juliette expressed a preference for the name of Clémentine. The Colonel begged her pardon. After all, it was Clémence. That did not matter. Mademoiselle liked the name of Clémence nearly as well as Clémentine. The Colonel tugged at the other side of the fiercely-waxed moustache, and changed the subject.

"The pavement rings beneath the heel; I prophesy frost to-night. Thou art cold, my child, I saw thee shiver. Shall we walk more quickly ? It will be better so."

She quickened her steps at the suggestion. There had already been frost, and the air was keen and sparkling as champagne. The young blood in her veins answered to the pleasant stimulus of exercise. Her cheeks were rose-tinted porcelain, her eyes blue stars, despite her wretchedness, by the time they reached Madame Tessier's door.

The house of the Widow Tessier was in the Rue de Provence, which runs north from the Avenue de Saint Cloud, not far from above its junction with the Carrefour de Montreuil, and ends at the corner of the Boulevard de la Reine.

A quiet, retiring street, its houses separated by ample gardens, hidden by high walls of brick faced with fine gray Caen stone, generally festooned with pretty creepers and overtopped by stately trees. A noble pine shaded the green glass conservatory, large enough to be termed a winter-garden, which projected on the south side, from what was a solidly built villa plastered yellow, with a raised ground-floor, second storey and attic storey with Mansard windows; the short sloping roof, and these—indeed, the whole of the attic storey to the floor-line, where a fine-worked cornice of stone ran round the building—being covered with grayish-blue slates.

You rang at a gate of open ironwork, white-painted, in which was a smaller gate to admit pedestrians, and while you were waiting for someone to answer the bell, you had leisure to admire the heavy *porte cochère* upon your left, of solid oak timbers, studded with iron bolts, surmounted with a fine arch of stone, centred with a blank lozenge, and the neat balcony railing topping the wall to your right, in which was a modest little iron-studded door leading to the kitchen and servants' offices, always secured by a huge lock, and opened with much groaning of inward bolts.

You are to understand that the roof of the kitchen formed a leaden terrace upon which the bay of the drawing-room and other ground-floor windows opened; these, like the windows on the basement and upper storeys being furnished with outside shutters, the slatted wooden pattern, with which Continental travellers are familiar, yellow-painted to match the plaster of the walls. The terrace could be gained by a short flight of stone steps rising upon your right as you entered. But upon a visit of ceremony you

went on to the main entrance, which was reached by a handsome ascent of five broad, shallow steps of the Caen stone, continued along the north and east sides of the house, so that from any of the ground-floor windows, which were all of antique French door-pattern, you could descend into the garden at will. The hall-door commanded a view of the stables and the cottage attached to them, whose tenant combined the office of coachman with the duties of a gardener. You could not call those buildings unpicturesque, covered as they were with the now leafless branches of a great vine and a magnificent wistaria. Beyond there stretched a kitchen-garden, with beds of flowers and vegetables, under glass and in the open; and splendid espaliers, whence many a basket of luscious cherries, huge blue plums, brown Bon Chrétien pears, and melting nectarines, were gathered for the table in the season of such luscious fruits. And behind and to the north side of the villa was the pleasaunce, which must have formed part of a nobleman's park at one time. For winding walks bordered with ground-ivy led you in and out and amongst clumps of oak and chestnut, and stately limes and acacias stood upon the sunlit spaces of its velvet lawns; while near its bounds shrubberies and thickets of Portugal laurel and lilac, bird-cherry and hawthorn, syringa and arbutus harboured thrush and blackbird, and in spring rejoiced the lover of beauty and perfume; and one great tulip tree opened its crimson-purple chalices beneath the rains and suns of early June. From the eastern boundary-wall jutted a stone pipe, ending in a mask, from the mouth of which fell a jet of clear water, forming a tiny pond, and a brook that ran away between stones covered with moss and overgrown with ferns and water-plants. But just now the pond was frozen, and a great icicle hung from the jaws of the grinning Satyr, and the blackened leaves of the water-loving plants and club-mosses were hidden

under a thin covering of recently-fallen snow. What strange uses this place was to serve before the terrible year of 1870 was ended! How many letters signed "Charles" were to be drawn by the tiny hand of P. C. Breagh's Infanta from that grinning satyr-mouth.

Entering the house—for you are to see it plainly, serving as it did for a theatre upon whose table the life-blood of France was to flow; and her body, beneath the steady, skilful hands of a man well fitted to perform such operations, was fated to undergo a terrible mutilation—entering the house by the double glass-doors, you found yourself in a parqueted hall, furnished with Empire consoles and large mirrors in frames of tarnished gilding. The chief staircase, covered with striped drugget in gray-and-red, you found immediately upon your right. Under this was the opening to a servants' stairway leading down to the kitchen beneath the terrace. Upon your left was a small door masking another servants' stairway leading to the attics; and beyond this two large folding-doors, covered with green baize, led into a medium-sized but lofty apartment, used as the dining-room, looking out on the garden, and hung with a crimson flock paper patterned with gilt palm-leaves, against which hung some large landscapes and antique hunting-scenes in oils. There was a handsome white marble fireplace, with a high mantel-slab supported by terminal figures, one a nymph, wanton-lipped and languid-eyed, her full voluptuous bosom partly veiled by a leopard skin, her dishevelled hair crowned with ivy, like that of her companion; a faun, and young, judging by his budding horns.

A third pair of folding-doors facing the hall-entrance opened into the drawing-room; a fourth to the right of these gave entrance to the billiard-room, from which access might be gained by a low glass door into the winter-garden, a high-domed glass house full of palms and tree-

ferns, boasting a little fountain, whose leaden dolphin, balanced almost perpendicularly on his tail in the centre of a moss-stained basin, could spout high enough to wet the green glass roof when any charitable hand might set him going. A door at the farther end of this winter-garden gave access to a small room lined with books, classical works by standard French authors for the most part, smelling mouldy, and apt, when a curious hand strove to remove them from their shelves, to stick to their neighbours on either side. And looking at the conservatory from outside, one perceived, running along the entire length of the rounded glass roof, a wrought-iron gangway, or double-sided balcony. From which, according to the testimony of Madame, the late M. Tessier, from whose dressing-room this aerial promenade could be gained by a glass door, had been accustomed to enjoy the prospect and breathe the air.

XXII.

Madame, a discreet and sensible-looking person, with very little more moustache than is becoming to a Frenchwoman of sixty, embraced Juliette warmly on both cheeks, and graciously received the Colonel's salute upon her mittened left hand. The mittens were invariably black in tribute to the memory of the late M. Tessier. Madame's half-mourning, gray poplin gown, trimmed with black gimp upon the gores, round the bottom of the expansive skirt and upon the waist and shoulder-lappets, might have been the same she had always worn, in Juliette's memory. Her cap had lavender ribbons, her front was bay, whereas it had been chestnut, and the net of black chenille-velvet, in which she confined her back hair, plentiful in quantity and iron gray like her moustache and eyebrows, had silver beads upon it here and there.

Father and daughter were made welcome, were entertained with wine of Madeira, raspberry-vinegar—for which sweet, subacid beverage, diluted with water, young ladies were expected to express a preference—macaroons, ratafias, and little pink ice-cakes. The Colonel, having accepted a glass of the good vintage and consumed a biscuit, expressed a desire to walk round the garden; Madame, who had suggested the excursion, and Juliette, who had gone goose-flesh all over—were left to a *tête-à-tête*.

During the collation described above, Mademoiselle's blue eyes had discreetly raked the walls of the dining-room in search of portraits. Nothing rewarded her search but a highly-varnished oil presentment of a simpering young woman in the vast flowery bonnet, the bunches of side-curls, and the high-waisted gown of 1830, in whom one must perforce discover Madame in her twentieth year. A case of three miniatures hung beside the copper wood-tongs on the left of the fireplace. When Madame affectionately leaned to her young guest, patted her hand, and bade her take her seat upon a green velvet fauteuil between Madame's own high-backed arm-chair and the carved oak framed, glass-covered embroidery picture of Dido on her funeral pyre that served as fire-screen, Juliette, in the act of transit, cast a rapid glance at this case. In vain. Only M. Tessier, in a high satin stock, gray curls and strips of side-whisker, Madame in a lace cap, fiddle-bodied brown silk gown, berthe, and cameo brooch, and a chubby infant of indeterminate sex, with sausage curls and tartan shoulder-knots, rewarded her anxious scrutiny. She could not restrain a sigh.

To be taken by the chin is not unpleasant to a young lady, under the right conditions and given certain circumstances. But when the ringed and bony fingers enclosed in Madame's black mitten, turned the small, pale oval to the light, a choking lump rose in Juliette's throat, and the

black lashes veiled the eyes her aged friend would have peered in. She felt given over to harpies, abandoned and alone. Almost she could have rushed to one of the long French windows, wrenched it open, and fled to the shelter of her father. I wonder whether the Colonel was as ill at ease as his daughter, as he paced the winding paths under the leafless trees, between the beds of snow-powdered ground ivy, already sprinkled with patches of aconite in partially thawed places, shining yellow as little suns against dark leaves and wet brown earth. . . .

She could see him from the nearer of the three long windows opening on the steps that led to the garden. He walked among the trees bare-headed, holding his high silk hat and gold-topped Indian cane behind him, his handsome double chin bent upon his breast, his fine face full of care. Even his boldly-curled moustaches seemed to droop under the weight of sorrows that were no longer hidden from his child.

At the bottom of his heart he distrusted her, she was almost certain. And from the bottom of her own heart she forgave the cruel wrong. He had come to believe, since the great betrayal, that every woman save the Mother of all mothers, and his own, had it in her to play the traitress, given the opportunity. Thus the opportunity was not to be given to Juliette.

Madame was speaking. She no longer held the little chin, though the chill of her hard finger-tips still seemed to cling to it. She smiled benevolently, making curves of parenthesis in her well-powdered cheeks, and sometimes punctuating her sentences by a rather disconcerting click of teeth that were too startlingly white and never seemed to fit properly.

"One understands, my cherished" (*click*), "that this visit is a little *triste* for thee. . . . One who should have been here to welcome thee does not appear. To repress

the feelings is *convenable* " (*click*) " in a young girl of good education, but nevertheless one cannot hide the oppression of the heart. Rest assured, my little one, that my Charles—who is to be thy Charles so soon "—Madame's playfulness, emphasised by the click described, was more than a little grisly—" suffers as thou dost. He is chagrined to the very soul, believe me ! that he cannot be with thee here to-day. Detained in Belgium, at Mons-sur-Trouille (where he has a manufactory for the production of woollen fabrics)—by important business in connection with an immense order given by a Paris firm of " (*click*) " drapers, thou canst picture him counting the hours that must elapse before the happy moment of his return. He is ardent, my Charles—noble, sincere, religious, and candid. I, his mother, say to thee: Thou art happy " (*click*) " to have won the love of so estimable a young man !"

And with this maternal peroration two gray poplin sleeves went out and enfolded Mademoiselle de Bayard, and two rapid touches of Madame Tessier's moustache visited first her left cheek and then her right one. Fluttering like a caught robin, Juliette faltered:

" You are so good, dear Madame, but when did I win it ?" She added, released from the imprisoning sleeves, and with a bright red rose of agitation blooming in the centre of each pale cheek: " Alas ! I refer to the love of M. Charles Tessier. . . . If I might know where he has seen me ? . . . I cannot recollect his ever having been presented to me. In my mind, Madame, your son has no form, no features. . . . It is terrible, but there you have the fact !"

The truth was out at last. Now that the room had left off whirling, Madame's benevolent smile shone forth unchanged. She clicked, and returned with archness that was laboured.

" My Juliette, I comprehend. Thou wert just a little

bewildered. . . . Thy father has not made it quite clear. . . . Ah, naughty M. le Colonel, I shall scold him by-and-by !"

"Pray, no !" Juliette's little hands went out entreatingly. "Only explain, dear, dearest Madame, for I am bewildered, as you say truly. My father's command that I should leave school, provide myself with a *trousseau*, and come here to be married—instantly—to M. Charles Tessier ! —was so brusque—so sudden—that I might be pardoned for saying I have felt less like a young girl than a poor lamb, hurriedly taken from the fold and driven to the butcher's yard."

"Poor little lamb !" drolled Madame, still portentously playful, and displaying a gleaming double row of teeth between the parentheses. Juliette felt more than ever like the lamb of her analogy, as she strove to read the meaning of the smile. Madame continued: "Too much boldness—an excessive display of *sangfroid*—my Charles has ever disliked in women. When I tell him how *gentille* thou art, how sensitive, and how *spirituelle*, he will say to me, 'My mother, thou hast chosen well ! and when he sees thee . . .'"

Something in the well-powdered elderly face of the speaker, sent an electrical shock of comprehension through Juliette's being, evoking the cry:

"Sees me. . . . But then . . . he has never seen me ?"

It was necessary to hold on with one's own eyes to Madame's, they so spun and whirled in their rather small, round orbits. Then they steadied, as though she had made her mind up. She said, and though the treacly suavity had gone out of her voice, Juliette liked it better:

"No, my child—Charles has never seen thee. This is a betrothal—this will be a marriage exclusively arranged by the parents of the young people concerned. Thy father, the son of my beloved friend Antoinette de Bayard, does not desire that the husband of his Juliette should be a member

of the military profession,—I am averse to the idea of my son's bestowing his name upon the Protestant daughter of a Flemish woollen-manufacturer—for that that was originally my son's intention, I will not seek to deny. Wounded in my tenderest and most susceptible spot by the announcement of Charles' infatuation, I might have estranged him for ever—even hurried on the catastrophe I feared, had not the advice of my director, Dom Clovis, of the Carmelite Fathers—fortified and sustained me in the trying hour! I wrote to my son. I poured out my maternal heart in pleadings the most earnest—the most tender. I recalled to him the dispositions of his late father's will. Under this document," Madame went on, drying a tear with a deep-hemmed cambric handkerchief, "I possess the power at pleasure, to divert from Charles and his heirs a considerable portion of his sainted father's funded property. And that power," said Madame, drying another tear, "I solemnly assured my child, would—in the event of his union with Mademoiselle Clémence Basselôt—unhesitatingly be used."

Words might have come from the pale parted lips before her. Madame tapped them to silence with a mittened finger and pursued her way.

"Charles is profoundly reasonable—a quality he inherits from both parents. He wrote to me a letter inexpressibly touching in its expressions of filial trust and confidence, over which, I assure thee, I have shed the most consoling tears."

Something had previously crackled in the pocket of Madame's black silk apron, when she had smoothed it over her knees in seating herself. Now she drew it out, and Juliette saw a blue envelope directed in a handwriting of the business-like, copper-plate description. The sheet of white paper the envelope contained had an engraved picture-heading of a square building possessing many

windows—no doubt the Belgian cloth manufactory possessed in partnership by MM. Basselôt and Tessier. From the page, closely covered all down one side with regular lines of mercantile handwriting, Madame read:

"Sentiments of the most profound agitated me as I read thy letter. These sentences penned by a mother's hand, have touched me to the quick. Thy arguments, so delicate, yet so powerful, have convinced me of the impossibility of the union towards which—I will own!—my wishes urged me. I abandon the idea henceforth! Since Mademoiselle Clémence is not to be mine, choose then for me, best and noblest of women. Let her who taught my infant lips to murmur the beloved name of mother, select for me some virtuous young girl upon whom I may confer the equally sacred title of Wife.

"Thy Charles."

And there, with a flourish like a double lasso, M. Tessier's letter ended, leaving Juliette swaying between the impulse to shriek with laughter and the urgent desire to melt away in tears.

Madame came to her rescue by proposing a visit to the billiard-room, built and appointed by the late M. Tessier to afford his son wholesome recreation at home. For otherwise, Madame explained, the young man might have been allured by the amusements to be found in the saloons of the Hôtel des Reservoirs and other brilliant and fashionable lounges, full of dissipated civilians and officers of every branch of the military and naval services. Clubs Madame regarded as gateways to eternal perdition. She dried another tear as she thanked Heaven that her beloved child did not belong to one. When possible, she added, Charles avoided restaurants. A congenital delicacy of constitution rendered over-seasoned dishes little less than poison to him; he habitually suffered from nettle-rash

after the consumption of shellfish. Green salad was, upon this count, pernicious to his well-being. Nor should he ever be permitted to sleep without a nightcap, having been subject to earache from his youth.

The mental picture of Charles, suffering from an attack of nettle-rash and crowned with his protective nightcap, sent the listener's balance dipping towards hysteria. They were in the billiard-room, a pleasant, longish *salle,* with two high windows opening on the frontwards terrace. The glass door stood open leading into the winter-garden: from whence came a smell of hot-water pipes, damp moss, and mould, with an added whiff of ferniness, and a suggestion of the cockroaches and mice that pervaded the place.

And then: "Thou seest, my sweet Juliette"—pray imagine Madame, indicating with a lifted mitten a gilt-framed square of canvas hanging between the two French windows—" a speaking portrait, painted but two years ago, of my—I should say, of our beloved Charles."

Obediently the eyes of Mademoiselle Bayard followed the direction of the pointing finger. The painter or the evil genius of Charles Tessier had induced him to sit for his portrait in the habiliments of the chase; thus in sporting checks of the chessboard pattern, with the addition of yellow leather leggings, gun pads, and a game bag, and holding between his knees a weapon which obviously embarrassed him, he was presented for the first time to the gaze of his future bride. Those eyes of Juliette's fastened on the canvas a single moment before their dusky lashes dropped. But in that moment Mademoiselle had classified Charles as belonging to the Order of Invertebrates; comprehended his profound insignificance, and realised that from the owner of a head so commonplace, eyes so round, and a nose so blunt, a mouth so lax, and cheeks so pink and chubby—possibly the artist had been liberal of carmine—nothing more of originality, decision, manly force,

or power of will might be expected than is commonly demanded of the child's whirligig of stick and cardboard, as seen gyrating madly or spinning feebly under the impetus of its owner's breath.

It was impossible, Mademoiselle told herself, to detest a being so utterly devoid of character—a human pad of blotting-paper—as uninteresting as a counting-house stool. One could only pity him, and hope for his mother's sake that sound business capacities were concealed behind that characterless forehead, topped with brown hair cut very short and standing upon end—and wonder at or congratulate Mademoiselle Clémence. Flamandes are generally big and muscular. One could only hope that she had taken Charles by his sloping shoulders and soundly shaken him when he had backed out of his proposal of marriage. Though possibly he had never spoken to the girl at all.

M. le Colonel found his daughter silent during their walk back to the Barracks. After a questioning eyeshot or so at the dainty little figure that moved so demurely beside him—abandoning the vain endeavour to read her mood from the droop of the pure eyelids, the chiselled lines of the exquisite profile—the father relapsed into his own sad thoughts. And then Juliette, stealing a glance at him, realised, with a pang, that his once luxuriant black curls were thinning in places, and already thickly sown with white hairs. The upright martial carriage was marred by a rounding of the shoulders—the stoop of a man upon whose back sits perched Black Care. The seams of the immaculately brushed frock-coat of civil ceremony were shiny in places—the rosette of red ribbon at the lapel was frayed and faded—the tiny medal tarnished and dull. Perhaps the mood of the wearer, be it hopeful or despondent, can affect the apparel, as the chameleon's wrinkled skin changes from the hue of dead

bark to the vivid green of young leaves when sunlight touches it, and fades back to the neutral tint when the golden ray is withdrawn.

Juliette would not have thanked me for that analogy of the prehensile-tongued, long-tailed lizard. Inconstancy as described by the poets, is typified by the chameleon, and her faith in the sincerity and truth of her Colonel was founded upon the living rock.

We know that she had, or thought she had, discovered why he dared not trust her to a husband whose career must lead him from her. "My blood," she had murmured to herself sorrowfully, "it must" (she meant unfaith) "be in my blood!" The reason for his desperate haste was all beyond her. It must be cruel, because it hurt him so.

That heart of hers was as great as she herself was tiny. Titania at need could love like a Titaness. And the blood of Antigone runs in the veins of living women even to this day, though the noble daughter of Ædipus died a virgin unspotted. When the fairy hand in the perfectly-fitting gray glove crept under the Colonel's elbow, it gave, with the smile that accompanied it, a silent pledge of fidelity to the death. But oh, blind father, could you have seen her, in that inmost chamber of the heart where the most innocent maiden shrines the imaginary portrait of a lover—taking down the stately canvas bearing the presentment of a soldier-hero unknown, and hanging up in its place the picture of a mere Charles Tessier, your eyes, like those of the protagonist of the Greek drama, would have wept tears of blood.

That night a letter was penned to Monica in the small, delicately pointed handwriting that seemed appropriate to Juliette.

"To you, dear friend, who have exacted of me the pledge that I will write to you before all, a faithful descrip-

tion of the person of my future husband, I hasten to fulfil the vow. M. Charles Tessier has a fine head and a fine hand, my father praises his capacity for business and his skill at the billiard-table with equal fervour. Of his powers of conversation I have as yet not sufficient experience to afford you an opinion. In the presence of his mother he has been silent and reserved. His letters, however, are eloquently expressed and forcible. When I mention his letters, it should be explained that affairs have entailed upon him the necessity of a journey to Belgium, where he remains for the present, at the house of his partner, M. Basselôt. Thou wilt draw from this the correct conclusion that I am not yet married. Do not forget to pray for thy faithful

"JULIETTE."

"See you well, I am happy—content—I dream not of impossibilities. *J'ai pris mon parti.* I am sensible, me!"

In answer to a second letter from Monica received upon the ending of the month there came:

"Tell M. Breagh that I have received his message, so generously worded. Alas! the poor young girl had no intention of wounding a heart at once so courageous and so proud. His fellow-student is unjust to himself. Why term that 'brutality' which was merely honest *brusquerie?* Yet if he gave pain—and I do not deny it was so—he may rest assured he has been forgiven. Tell this to thy brother, from

"JULIETTE."

"M. Charles Tessier is still delayed by affairs in Belgium. I visit his mother nearly every day. An excellent housekeeper and *cuisinière*, she is charmed with my skill in cooking. For her and for my father, who dines with her frequently, I plan delightful little *menus*. They eat, and

praise the dishes and cry—at least, Madame cries; '*Ah, Heaven! if my Charles were only here!*' In a letter which this morning's post brought me from the person mentioned, he dwells with that impassioned luxuriance of imagery, warmth of colour and fulness of expression not denied to his sex, upon our approaching union. One cannot deny that it is pleasant to be the sole object in life of a young man so worthy and so amiable, and—ah, my dearest! were the sacrifice of a personal wish demanded of me, could I, *knowing what I*" (*scratched out*) "refuse to gratify the cherished desire of my dear father's heart? Each day that finds me by his side, closes in deeper respect and love more ardent. Our Lord, Whose will it was to leave me motherless, decreed that in him I should find the tenderness of a father and that of a mother too.

"J. M. DE B."

For the delectation of those readers who are anxious to sample the luxuriant imagery, glowing colour and plenitude of expression ascribed to the epistolary communication received by Mademoiselle de Bayard from M. Charles Tessier I append the letter referred to as above:

"BASSELÔT AND TESSIER,

"WHOLESALE MERCHANTS.

"WEAVERS AND DYERS OF WOOLLEN FABRICS.

"MONS-SUR-TROUILLE,

"BELGIUM.

"— *January*, 187[illegible]

"MADEMOISELLE,

"That I have been tardy in personally assuring you of my profound regard and unfaltering devotion you will pardon, knowing me detained in a foreign country in the interests of my business affairs.

"Assured that all that concerns my welfare will naturally

possess for you the deepest interest, I hasten to inform you that jointly with my partner, M. Felix Basselôt, I have entered into a scheme to facilitate the manufacture of our woollen cloths and other textile fabrics by the purchase and installation of the most recently-invented machines. Raw cloths are now subjected to perching, knotting, milling, washing, hydro-extracting, gigging, cutting, cropping, boiling, brushing and steaming processes of the latest invention, and we claim that the output of our manufactory will henceforth vie with the first qualities of goods advertised by the leading firms of Belgium, England and France.

"My mother's letters palpitate with your praises. What happiness, Mademoiselle, awaits the man who shall be privileged to confer upon such beauty, goodness, and amiability, the sacred name of wife. You will be interested to hear that for Saxonies, tweeds, merinos, and cashmeres for ladies' drapery our house maintains its old reputation, as well as for the heavier fabrics of masculine wear.

"Were I now at your side, how enchanting it would be to confide to you that we have struck out a bold and original line in dress-stuffs, dyed with the new agent called Aniline. It is extracted from coal-tar, and the magenta so much admired by our Parisian *mondaines* is obtained from it, by treating the crude substances with the chloride of tin. From magenta we derive rosaniline, a dye as delicate yet as passionate as a lover's fondest wishes. In an experiment recently made in my presence I beheld a pure young girl immerse in a solution of this extraction containing a little ammonia, a spotless lily, when instantly the virginal blossom's whiteness was changed to the loveliest roseate hue.

"Thus, dear Mademoiselle, your soul, so chaste, so spotless, and so innocent, being plunged in the consecrated vat of marriage, will assume the glowing hue of Love. Bleu de Lyons, with Violet Imperial, all the most fashionable

shades of mauve and other colours can be obtained by methods equally simple, and with the addition of aldehyde and sulphuric acid, we secure a green of the most brilliant, and a yellow that enchains the eye. By a simple process these colours may be fortified to stand the test of washing, as firmly and unchangeably as the affection I am privileged to offer you; which is hallowed by the blessing of the best of mothers, and of a father noble as your own.

"Receive then, dear Mademoiselle, the tenderest assurances of devotion,

"From yours eternally,

"Charles Joseph Tessier."

Over this epistle, apparently begotten between a trade-circular and a polite letter-writer, Juliette had wept helpless tears of mirth. Reading it, one may conjure up a picture of the excellent Charles, spurred by the maternal threat of partial disinheritance to a desperate effort, bending over the paper in the throes of composition, diluting the ink with the sweat of a non-intellectual brow.

Also, one may suspect the anonymous heroine of the experiment with the lily to have been none other than Mademoiselle Clémence Basselôt, but the suspicion has not, to the present date, been verified.

XXIII.

In the July of that year, while the gilding was yet untarnished upon France's brand-new Constitution—ratified by a *plebiscitum* obtained after the usual methods, and recording seven millions of pinchbeck votes—while the Imperial Court of the Third Napoleon played at Arcadian pastorals under the mistletoe-draped oaks and spreading beeches of St. Cloud, the question of the Candidacy of

Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern for the vacant Throne of Spain appeared in the firmament of European politics (even as the voice of Lord Granville prophesied a lengthy period of unbroken fine weather)—and broke about the ears of the Power most concerned like a stinging shower of hail.

The Spanish crown upon the head of a Hohenzollern. Rather a Montpensier, intolerable as that would have been. True, the Almanach de Gotha had offered (to General Prim, President Zorilla, and the Cortes, assembled in solemn session) only the unwelcome alternative of the legal heir to the throne going begging; true, the Spanish people were very well satisfied with the idea of being ruled by a Catholic gentleman of Royal blood, suitable age, handsome person, and military experience, married to a Portuguese princess, and possessing two healthy sons.

But that a Prussian Prince, holding a commission in Prussia's Army, should be set up like a signpost of warning on France's southern frontier, as though to keep her in mind of what would happen in the event of another war on the Rhine—was, from the Gallic point of view, intolerable. "The security and the dignity of the French nation are endangered by this candidacy!" cried Jules Favre. According to M. Thiers, "the nominacy was not only an affront to the nation, but an enterprise adverse to its interests." Gambetta cried aloud that all Frenchmen must unite for a national war. Marshal Vaillant made a memorandum in his notebook. "*This signifies war, or something very like it!*" And at the Council of Ministers hastily summoned to St. Cloud on the morning of the sixth of July, the Emperor passed to the Duke de Gramont, his Foreign Minister, a pencilled communication. "*Notify Prince Gortchakoff at Petersburg that if Prussia insists upon the accession of the Prince of Hohenzollern to the throne of Spain, it will mean war!*"

What haste to clutch at the *casus belli*. When the Ministers quitted the Imperial Council, and the Corps Législatif opened its session, long-continued applause greeted the declaration of Gramont from the tribune that a certain unnamed Third Power, by placing one of its Princes on the throne of Charles V., threatened to disturb the equilibrium of Europe, to imperil the material interests and endanger the honour of France. "If it be impossible to prevent this," ran the peroration, "strong in your support, Messieurs, we shall perform our duty without hesitation or faltering!" Here was an ultimatum that sounded the very note of war.

Do you hear the echo of the thunderous acclamations that attended the Foreign Minister to his seat, the clapping of hands, stamping of feet, roaring of lungs that have been dust for more than forty years, or are now on the point of dissolving into their native element? Naturally because the Right were defiant, the Left called their utterances bellicose. Had the Right manifested a disposition to turn the other cheek in Scriptural fashion, the Left would have passionately taunted this band of politicians with cowardice, lack of patriotism, indifference to the sacred cause of national freedom,—would have accused them of being traitors to their country, and Heaven knows what else.

The Press threw oil upon the roaring conflagration. Were this affront submitted to, cried the *Gaulois*, "there would not exist a woman in the world who would accept a Frenchman's arm!" The *Correspondant* was "relieved to find that Frenchmen once more have become Frenchmen." The *Moniteur Universel* was charmed to discover that the blame for this momentous conflict could never be attributed to the French Government. The *Figaro* left off making a cockshy of the Imperial dignity, to admit that for once, the Emperor's official mouthpiece had spoken the right word. And the *Débats* praised the attitude taken by the

Government. "Silence at this juncture would," it cried, "have been pusillanimous. Shall the nation be accused of bowing its head for the second time, before the cannon of Sadowa?"

Lord Granville, replacing the recently deceased Clarendon at Great Britain's Foreign Ministry, mentioned to the Spanish Ambassador to England that the choice of Prince Leopold would create a sore. He wrote to Layard at Berlin that he considered France had been given good cause of resentment. Lyons, in the shoes of Lord Cowley, at the English Embassy in Paris, wrote to his chief that the unhappy affair had revived all the old animosity, though it seemed to him that "neither the Emperor or his Ministers really wish or expect war!" The *Times* of July 8th was severe on the policy of Prussia; the *Standard* for once expressed the same opinion as the *Times*. The *Daily Telegraph* prophesied that the succession of the Prussian Prince would mean France's present humiliation and future peril. The *Pall Mall Gazette* poked mordant fun at the attitude of unconsciousness assumed by King William, who, between sips of Ems water, declared his ignorance of the whole affair. The *Early Wire*, backing and filling, kept an even keel for a day or two. Then said Mr. Knewbit confidentially to P. C. Breagh, one midsummer evening, after the early supper:

"My opinion is we are a-going to give a leg-up to this 'ere 'O'enzollern business, our Chief being—when England, Home, and Duty permit him to indulge the weakness—a red-'ot admirer of a Certain Person at Berlin. Who"—Mr. Knewbit's wink was infinitely sagacious—"is said on the strict Q.T. to have put up Field-Marshal Prim and the Government at Madrid to making the proposal to the young gentleman. For the sake of giving a jolt-up to the elderly swell at the Tuileries. We all have our ideal 'eroes," Mr. Knewbit added, "and our Chief's partiality dates from his acting in an emergency as Special War Cor-

respondent for his own paper, durin' the Prusso-Austrian War of 1866. It was at the Battle of——that name always beats me——"

"Königgrätz, perhaps ?" suggested Carolan.

"Königgrätz—when this 'ere Bismarck spurs his big brown mare up to Colonel von Somebody to ask him why, seeing the 'eavy losses occurring in his neighbourhood from Austrian Artillery—he didn't ride forward with his Cuirassiers to find out where the shells came from ? Took our Chief's fancy uncommon, that did, as the iron sugar-plums was dropping freely in the neighbourhood, and when he had rode on, swearing at the Colonel like anything you can imagine—the old man picked up a cigar-stump he'd pitched away, and keeps it to this hour in the pen-tray of the silver inkstand the Proprietors presented him with when he came home."

Said P. C. Breagh reflectively: "It's the rule, invariably. Men love Bismarck or lampoon him—swear by him—or swear at him. He's the devil or a demigod—there's no alternative!"

"Good !" said Mr. Knewbit, leaning back in his Windsor chair, and rubbing the ear of the ginger Tom with the toe of one of his carpet slippers. "Tell us a bit more. Anything you can lay hold of. I want to see him stand out a bit clearer in my mind."

"He gets his name from the Wendish—I've read in the *Kleine Anekdotenbuch*," said P. C. Breagh, "that 'Bismarck' really means 'beware of the thorns.' And there's a golden sprig of blackberry-bramble among the family quarterings, so perhaps there's something in it, after all. An ancestor of his who lived in the sixteenth century was a tailor—and a natural son of Duke Philip of Hesse, by the way ! Duke Philip was a lineal descendant of St. Elizabeth of Hungary—who in her turn was descended from the Emperor Charlemagne——"

"Lor' bless my soul!" said Mr. Knewbit, rubbing his knees.

"And he—this man you want to know about!—was born the younger son of a Pommeranian country squire, and entered the University of Göttingen in 1831. They say that he permitted study to interfere so little with the more serious business of amusement that the name of Mad Bismarck was given him then, and has stuck to him, even when he passed his examination as Referendar, and began to practise law in the Municipal Court of Aix-la-Chapelle."

Mr. Knewbit, drinking in the information at every pore, nodded "*More*"—and P. C. Breagh obliged him:

"He served his year as Volunteer at Potsdam in the *Jägers* of the Guard, and then went home to the paternal estate of Kneiphof, and began sowing wild oats—acres and acres of them. The officers of the garrison were a hard-drinking set of fellows, and the county *Junkers* scorned to be outdone by them—so they hunted, and shot, and danced, and made love to the local beauties—they dined and supped and gambled and fought duels. In fact, they did all the things men usually do when they mean to have a high old time and don't care a damn for the consequences," said P. C. Breagh, "and when you regularly hail smiling morn with cold punch, beer, and corn-brandy, and wind up the night with quart-beakers of champagne and porter, the consequences must be——"

"A taut skin and a fiery eye next morning," interpolated Mr. Knewbit, "and a tongue like a foul oven-plate or a burned kettle-bottom. But—my stars!—what a constitution that man must have to be as hale and as hearty, and as upright as they say he is, at fifty-five, and with a family of grown-up sons! One wonders how his sweetheart ever had the courage to marry such a—such a Ring-tailed Roarer. . . . But Love's a thing you can't account for nohow."

"I have heard that the Fräulein Puttkammer's family objected to the engagement," said P. C. Breagh, "but he seems to have got over their prejudices in a way peculiarly his own. By betrothing himself privately to the Fräulein first, and then calling openly to inquire how the family felt about it," he added, in response to the interrogative hoist of Mr. Knewbit's eyebrows, "and taking the precaution, upon entering the room — to hug the young lady before all her friends."

"The hugging would settle the thing—in Germany ?" asked Mr. Knewbit.

"To a dead certainty."

"Without any male cousin or anything of that kind getting up and calling the hugger out ?" asked Mr. Knewbit dubiously.

"When a man is six feet two inches in height, is as strong as a bull, and possesses a well-earned reputation as a fencer and pistol-shot, even male cousins," returned P. C. Breagh, "are content to sit still and let him hug."

"And then he married her and went into politics—and to-day, when the Press says 'Prussia,' it means *him !*" cried Mr. Knewbit. "What our Chief likes, and what fetches me !—is his cool owdaciousness. If ever I chance to find myself in Berlin," he added, "before visiting any State Collection of Art Objects ever brought together—I'd choose to ' ave a look at that man !"

Said P. C. Breagh:

"I've seen the Iron Chancellor just once—in '67—passing through Schwärz-Brettingen on his way to Berlin. It was in my first *semester* at the University, and just after the Constitution of the North German Bund was put into force by Royal Patent. The Social Democrats had protested against the withdrawal of the Prussian garrison from the independent State of Luxembourg—wanted to rush Germany into war over the business, and they, as well

as the *Ultramontane*, having plenty of followers among the students—both parties formed up on the platform of the railway-station, and gave the Count three groans."

"How did he take 'em—the groans, I mean ?"

'Rather as if he liked them, now I come to think of it. I can see him now, in civil dress, black frock-coat, vest and trousers, with a white choker something like a Lutheran clergyman's. And he jammed his great black felt hat down on his head and thrust his huge body half out of the carriage window. His eyes—fierce blue eyes heavily pouched underneath, and blazing from under shaggy eyebrows—swept over us as though we were a lot of squeaking mice—though he was laughing in a good-tempered sort of way. And he shouted something in dialect—they said it was a common Pommeranian proverb, '*Let not live men fight over a dead dog!*'"

"Meaning—— ?"

"Meaning, one would suppose, that the Luxembourg garrison was a right which had been given up as unimportant, and therefore was of no more value than a dead dog, set against the cost of a new war."

"I'm obliged for your information," said Mr. Knewbit, pushing back his chair and getting up to reach his brass tobacco-box from the high kitchen mantelshelf. "In return I'll give you a bit o' news—which may be of walley to you. You have been talking A.1 journalism, young man, as different from the stuff you commonly put on paper as gold is from this metal"—he tapped the brass tobacco-box—"and—my advice is—For the future, write only of what you know; have felt, and heard and seen !"

He sucked despairingly at the wooden pipe he was filling, and finding it foul, stuck the stem in the spout of the boiling kettle—a practice abhorred of Miss Ling—and left it to be cleaned as he continued:

"Big things are going on in the world at this moment—things worth watching and waiting for. Damme !—though

I'm not a swearer as a rule," said the little man, "if I don't wish I could change places with something that has wings. The great man we have been a-talking of is at this minute at his country-seat in Pommerania—that's the estate he bought with the grant—sixty thousand pounds English, it came to—the German Parliament voted him after the Prussian-Austrian War. And the King of Prussia is at Ems, a-drinking the waters, and the French Ambassador has been sent there by the Emperor Napoleon III. to obtain a special audience, I'm told. And if you or me could swop jobs with a fly on the wall at one place or the other—being a German insect it would be likely to understand their crackjaw language—me or you would be able to supply a leaded half-column for Special Issue that would fairly set the world afire. See this !"

He took the short poker from the top of Miss Ling's kitchen-range, and, pushing back his chair, rose and approached the wall, which was destitute of pictures, and distempered in an economical brown colour.

"Look here, I say ! . . ." began P. C. Breagh.

"The breath of genius inflates me," said Mr. Knewbit, who had had more than his allowance of beer at supper. "The impulse to prophesy stimulates me. Look at this !"

He wielded the poker deftly as he spoke. And on the brown distemper appeared in huge white letters:

WILL THERE BE WAR?

YES!

HOHENZOLLERN QUESTION NO DEAD DOG TO FRANCE!

GAUL AND TEUTON RIPE FOR CONFLICT.

BISMARCK'S VIEWS!

"But, there, my inspiration gives out," said Mr. Knewbit, replacing the poker on the range, and shaking his head

mournfully, "unless it was possible to change with that fly on the wall—and take him at one of his expansive confidential moments—if he ever has any—neither me nor any other man living will ever be able to give Bismarck's real views upon this or any other subject dealing with Politics. Who's this ?"

The hall-door had slammed a moment previously. There had been a step upon the oilcloth-covered basement staircase, and now it bore Miss Ling's first-floor lodger, Herr von Rosius, the "quiet gentleman," who taught German to English students and English to Germans at the Institute of Languages in Berners Street, W.—across the threshold of her tidy kitchen, pipe in mouth and hat in hand.

"Meine Herren, I haf to beg your pardons ! I seek the Fräulein Ling——" he was beginning, when suddenly the tall, broad-shouldered figure in the ill-fitting checked tweed clothes was petrified into rigidity. The felt hat he had civilly removed dropped from his hand, his jaws clenched on his inseparable meerschaum. Bolt upright, crimson to the hair, and staring through his steel-rimmed spectacles, he stood confronting the huge white letters that disfigured Miss Ling's brown distemper.

"*Kreuzdonnerwetter ! was ist dies ?*" Carolan heard him mutter in his own tongue. "*Es ist in jedermans Mund !*" Then he recovered himself almost instantly, picked up his hat, and gave good-evening in his stiff, yet civil, way.

XXIV

"GOOD-EVENING ! Miss Ling is out, and won't be back for an hour," explained Mr. Knewbit, "but if there was anything you were wanting in a hurry, I'll see that you get it, somehow."

"Thanks, thanks!" said Herr von Rosius pleasantly. "So that I shall have my bill within an hour I shall need nothing. Pray inform the Fräulein I haf just received a cable from my family in Germany. They tell me I am wanted at home."

"Sorry, sorry!" said Mr. Knewbit in his pouncing manner. "Sudden, sudden! Hope no bad news?"

Von Rosius's pale blue eyes might have been stones, they were so hard, and had so little expression. He removed and wiped his glasses with his silk handkerchief, and said, carefully replacing them:

"*Nein, ganz und gar nicht*, but my mother is in need of me. So I have resigned my post at the Berners Street Institute of Languages, and got my passport from our North German Consul in your city. Be so good to give my message to the Fräulein. I go upstairs to pack my trunks and bags!"

Von Rosius's long legs had carried him to the first-floor before Mr. Knewbit had done rubbing his ear and thinking. When his sitting-room door had banged, and the kitchen gaselier ceased to vibrate at the concussion, the little man said, looking at Carolan:

"You have an eye in your head, young chap, and have lived in that gentleman's country, and speak his language. And yet the setting of his upper lip and the blank expression he throwed into his spectacles when I put a plain question to him, have told me more about him than you've learned. I'll bet you a ginger-ale that Germany is his mother, and he has been recalled to serve in the Reserve Force, I forget what they call it just now."

"They call the Reserve the Reserve, but I expect you mean the *Landwehr*," returned Carolan, wondering at the little man's sharpness.

"That's it. Listen to him singing," said Mr. Knewbit, as the first-floor sitting-room door banged open again,

heavy steps crossed the landing, and the robust baritone of Herr von Rosius trolled forth a fragment of song: "Now, if that might be anything in the 'Rule Britannia' line, my ginger-ale's as good as won."

"It's the *Wacht am Rhein*," said P. C. Breagh, returning enlightened from an excursion to the bottom of the kitchen staircase, "and I believe you've hit the nail on the head."

"He served in '66 he told me," said Mr. Knewbit, indicating the unseen von Rosius with an upward jerk of his chin, "and now he's got to go back and be a cog or a screw-nut somewhere in the big war-machine you've told me of. What did he call Service of the Active kind? 'Camping under the helmet-spike.' We shall miss him, for a quieter and civiller lodger never wore out oilcloth. Hark!—that was the hall-door. Monsieur Meguet's back uncommon early. As a rule, after the Museum Print Room closes he goes to his club in Leicester Square."

The French gentleman who lived on the second floor had ascended the doorsteps simultaneously with Mr. Ticking. Mounting to the hall on his way upstairs, attended by the ginger Tom—no longer a kitten—P. C. Breagh found them, surrounded by a blue haze of Sweet Caporal and Navy Cut, finishing a political discussion on the mat, while Mr. Mounteney, languidly leaning against the door-post of the ground-floor front-parlour, listened with a detached and weary air.

"*C'est le bouc emissaire*—I tell you he is the scape-goat of a diplomat's malice!" declared the French gentleman. "Of himself he is without designs—unambitious! a good child, nothing more! Brave as he is—has he not been trained from infancy to hardihood and acts of daring?—has he not slept with but a blanket for covering, and eaten the soldier's sausage of pea? . . . Brave as he is, he dare not draw upon his unhappy country the terrible—the devastating—the exterminating wrath of France!"

The French gentleman whose profession was Prints had spoken loudly,—possibly without the design of being heard upon the first floor.

Now, as he paused to wipe his streaming brow with a brilliant green silk handkerchief, a door upon the landing immediately above was suddenly thrown open, and as a trunk was dragged across the landing, a stave of the German equivalent to "Rule, Britannia," boomed forth in Herr von Rosius' powerful baritone :

> *"While there's a drop of blood to run,*
> *While there's an arm to hold a gun—*
> *While there's a hand to wield a sword—*
> *Brum—brum brum brum——"*

The German words were lost in the racket accompanying the violent ejection of heavy articles from the bedroom. Comparative calm ensued as M. Meguet continued:

"Disciplined, well-drilled, energetic, and brave, the Army of France is unmatched and invincible. Our Emperor assures us upon the honour of a Napoleon, that, equipped and ready to the last buckle—to the final gaiter-button, it waits but the signal to roll on. Its musket is infinitely superior to the Prussian needle-gun, that feeble invention of an ill-balanced mind !—its artillery is commanded by a picked corps of officers—is enforced by that terrific weapon, the *mitrailleuse*. The Army of Prussia is a bundle of dry bones, fastened together—not with living sinews—but with rusty wire. The Prussian Monarch is a tottering pantaloon of seventy-three, crowned with dusty laurels; who submits to be the puppet of a demon in human form! The Genius of France is a divine and glorious being, whose soul burns with the noble thirst for warlike achievements, whose blood courses with the fire and heat of unimpaired youth. . . ."

From upstairs came the big baritone, buzzing like a gigantic bumble-bee :

" The oath is sworn—the hosts roll on,
In heart and soul thy sons are one.
Dear Fatherland, no fear be thine,
We'll keep our watch upon the Rhine !"

" I tell you !" cried M. Meguet passionately, and pitching his voice so as to be heard, if possible, still more distinctly on the floor above; " France will cross the Rhine ! Her hosts will inundate the soil of Germany like a vast tidal wave, and in one moment obliterate——"

Silence had prevailed above during the utterance of the above-recorded sentences. At the word " obliterate," a heavy canvas holdall dropped over the balusters of the upper landing, missing the speaker by a calculated inch; and as the ginger Tom, with an astonished curse, disappeared in the direction of the kitchen:

" *Prut !* " said the voice of von Rosius from above, " that was an uncommonly near shave. Pray pardon," he added, appearing on the staircase, emitting volumes of smoke from his big meerschaum. " I so much regret the accident !"

He was attired in rough travelling-clothes, and wore an intensely practical woollen cap with ear-flaps, though the July night was oppressively hot. And his spectacles were inscrutable as he gathered up the boots, slippers, and clothes-brush that had escaped from the holdall, leaned the bulky brown canvas mass against the hall-wainscoting, and felt in the drawer of the rickety hatstand that never had hats on it, for the cab-whistle that was wheezy from overwork.

" It is nothing, Monsieur, you have not deranged me for an instant," returned M. Meguet, with ominously smiling

bonhomie. Then refixing his late audience with his eye, he went on as though the interruption had never happened:

—" and obliterate from the face of the earth the entire German nation."

Von Rosius opened the hall-door, letting in the sultry smell of the hot street. He stood upon the threshold, and blew for a four-wheeler, one tittering, mocking trill. M. Meguet continued, quavering, and clutching his brow in the character of the terrified Hohenzollern, and imparting a tremor of agitation to his legs.

" Is it, then, to be wondered at," cries this unhappy Leopold, " that the opinion of Queen Victoria and the observations of the Czar of Russia have quickened scruples already existing in my breast ? Will my royal relatives wonder that I say: *This shall not be?* The brand designed to set a world on fire has been quenched by my mother's tears, and the entreaties of my wife and infants. Let M. de Bismarck mount the Spanish Throne, and adorn his crafty temples with this crown of piercing bayonets. I withdraw from this fatal candidacy, though the whole world should say——"

M. Meguet shrugged his shoulders and struck the blow for which he had been saving himself:

—" should say what the latest edition of that admirably-informed journal, the *Pall Mall Gazette,* quotes from this morning's edition of *Le Gaulois :*

" ' *La Prusse cane !* ' "

Von Rosius was standing on the threshold of the open door as the words hissed past him. Distant wheels were rumbling up the dusty cobblestones of Coram Street from the cabstand at the corner of Russell Square.

" Now, what's the English of that ?" asked Mr. Ticking, rashly.

" Possibly," remarked M. Meguet, with a sardonic smile at the tall figure and broad shoulders that blocked

the hall-doorway, "Herr von Rosius might be able to inform you!"

Von Rosius signalled to the driver of the approaching cab before he turned. In his rough, loosely-fitting clothes, he bulked large and menacing, though his spectacles were as inscrutable as ever, and under his light moustache his excellent teeth showed quite smilingly. He felt for money in his trousers-pocket as he answered composedly:

"With pleasure. It is a slang expression used by the blackguards of the lowest quarters of Paris. '*Cane*' is to 'back out' or to 'climb down,' as the Americans would say. Excuse me! I go to pay my bill."

He nodded slightly as he passed Ticking and Mounteney, and bestowed the same civility on P. C. Breagh. Then his heavy footsteps thundered down the kitchen staircase, from whose hatchway he emerged a few minutes later, accompanied by Mr. Knewbit, who had volunteered to help with the luggage, and this being stacked on the cab, their owner got into it, and Herr von Rosius, frigidly shaking hands with his English fellow-lodgers, and exchanging a distant salute with M. Meguet, got into the fusty vehicle and was driven away to the triumphant strains of the *Marseillaise*, performed by his racial antagonist on the piano appertaining to the first-floor sitting-room he had a moment previously vacated.

"'Prussia climbs down,'" murmured Mr. Knewbit, standing before the inscription on the kitchen distemper. "With the 'and on her 'elm that she 'as——" he went on shedding "h's," as was his way when deeply meditative, "I should doubt the correctness of that report. Still, I shall advise Maria to keep them first-floor apartments vacant a day or two—in case Mr. von Rosius's mother doesn't want him after all. . . . What does Solomon say? '*Designs are strengthened by counsels, and wars are to be managed by Governments.*'"

The kettle was boiling madly, and a volume of steam was issuing from the pipe-bowl. Mr. Knewbit rescued the blackened briar-root, mechanically filled it, and looked for a light.

There was a crumpled pale green paper lying near his boot upon the worn linoleum. He picked it up, and saw that it was a cablegram issued by the North German Submarine Telegraph Company, addressed to von Rosius, and containing a message of four words:

"*Lanze inden Schuh, Uhlan! Hauptquartier, Berlin.*"

"Now, which shall I do?" asked Mr. Knewbit, scanning the baffling foreign words written in the familiar English characters. Torn between conscientious scruples and a characteristic thirst for information, the little man was pitiable to see. "Which shall I do?" he repeated. "Use this here for a pipe-light—or show it to my young shaver upstairs?"

Deciding on the latter course, he climbed to the attic rented by the young shaver, and knocked at the door.

"Come in! . . . I'm not working to-night," said P. C. Breagh out of the darkness. Upon Mr. Knewbit's striking a match, the young man, who was leaning back in his chair before the venerable davenport, contemplating the dusk oblong of starry sky visible above the chimney-pots of Bernard Street, shook himself free of thought as a setter shakes off water, and got up.

"Feel out of sorts?" asked Mr. Knewbit, burning his fingers, and striking another match as he bustled to the single bracket over the narrow wooden mantelshelf and lighted the gas. "Anything wrong?"

"I feel out of the swim," said P. C. Breagh, sitting down again astride his chair, and cupping his square chin in a fist that had ink-smears on it, as he stared at the wobbling blue flame that presently spread itself into a yellow fan of

radiance, "and hipped and beastly. I've no right to quarrel with my bread-and-butter, but I'm doing it to-night. The fact that I'm a Nobody doesn't prevent me from wanting to wind up as Somebody. Putting the case roughly, that's what's wrong."

"This here house," said Mr. Knewbit in his pouncing manner, "belonged to a man who was a Nobody, if you like. A Master Seaman, who used to tramp it to his ship at Wapping, and pick up the outcast babies lying in the kennels, and roll 'em in his big boat-cloak and carry 'em home. Them foundlings was nobodies—yet two of 'em lived to be Lord Mayors of London. Old Captain Coram, who founded the Hospital, died neglected and forgotten, but nobody looking at his tomb in the Chapel yonder will deny he wound up as Somebody at last!"

P. C. Breagh yawned hugely and rumpled his hair discontentedly.

"The chap you're talking of was a philanthropist, and I want—I'm not ashamed to want—to build a career for myself instead of founding a charity-school. I want—your own talk has made me want!—to get out of this little squirrel-cage—even though there are nuts and sugar and bread in it all the year round. And"—his scowl was portentous—"if this Hohenzollern hadn't backed out of the Spanish Crown affair, when France cockadoodled, and there had been a racket on the Rhine frontier—I'd just have rummaged round to find an editor who'd be ass enough to pay a raw hand for letters sent from the seat of hostilities—and if I couldn't have found one—and of course I couldn't—when seasoned men are as plentiful as nutshells in the Adelphi gallery—I'd have gone to the war as a camp-follower—and got experience that way!"

Said Mr. Knewbit, turning and scanning the resolute, dogged young face, with black eyes that twinkled like jet beads:

"I don't agree with you that seasoned Correspondents are plentiful. There are thousands who're ready to sit in an office behind the Compositors' Room, and write eye-witnesses' accounts of thrilling charges. But them that are ready to go out with a Permit and get attached to a Staff; them that are ready and willing to march with an Army on the War path—starve when there are no rations, lie in the fields in the sopping rain when no roof's to be had to cover 'em—write accounts of the day's fighting under shell-fire, and cheerfully get killed if a bullet comes their way in the course o' things!—you can't call the journalistic profession overstocked with them. If you do, just name me one such man for each finger of these two big hands of mine. I defy you to, so there!"

They were very big hands, and as Mr. Knewbit held them up side by side, with the palms towards his young shaver, they not undistantly resembled a pair of decent-sized flat fish.

"To become a man like one of these—and they're the Pick of the British Nation," said Mr. Knewbit, "you must be pitched into the midst of things neck and crop, and left to sink or swim. I compliment you when I say that I believe you one of the swimming kind. Now, supposing War broke out after all—how much Hard Cash would you want to carry you through a Campaign?"

"I've got five pounds put away in the Post-Office Savings Bank," returned P. C. Breagh, after a moment's mental calculation, "and I believe I could manage if I had another fifteen."

"Making Twenty Pound," said Mr. Knewbit, biting a finger thoughtfully. He threw the finger out at P. C. Breagh, and his black eyes twinkled more than ever. "For Fifteen Pound down would you undertake to write and send home to the person advancing you the money, for—say four weeks (that'd give two nations comfortable

time to have it out and settle their differences in a Christianlike manner, with a little burning of powder, and bloodshed) — three letters per week, describing in a style readable by plain, ordinary, everyday people—what you've seen, and heard—and felt—and smelt—don't forget that!" said Mr. Knewbit, shaking his finger warningly at P. C. Breagh, "on the march, or in the bivouac, or while the fighting was going on?"

P. C. Breagh would have broken in here, but the held-up finger stopped him on the verge of utterance:

"Avoid sham Technicality," said Mr. Knewbit sternly. "Don't let me have stuff like: '*Sir—On the morning of the —th the Field-Marshal von Blitherem—or General Parlezvous—shifted the left wing of his Division nearer to his centre, and shortly after nine o'clock the forces under command of What'shisname and Thingummy began to move in column of so and so. A light 'aze lay upon the fields—the droppin' fire of the enemy's Artillery made itself felt at the Advance Posts nor' and nor'-west.*' Nor don't you ladle me out sentimental slumgullion, after the fashion of—'*All is Peace, while I pen these 'asty lines and sip my morning coffee. Yet ere the radiant beams of Sol will have dried the pearly dew from these smiling fields, the 'ideous roar of cannon and the withering burst of shrapnel will have devastated and blighted Nature's choicest 'andiwork, and Man, that noblest work of the Creative Power—will be engaged in the 'orrible task of destroying fellow-men wrought in the image of hisself.*' For the Lord is a Man of War—according to the Scriptures," said Mr. Knewbit, ignoring P. C. Breagh's amusement. "And it is written that He shall overthrow Kingdoms and break the sceptres of Kings, and cause that nations shall be swallowed up in nations." He added, with a sharp change to his business tone, "And bad or good, these letters of yours are mine, to burn or print as I think fit and necessary? All right! I'll draw up a little agreement—and

whenever you choose to sign it—there's your Fifteen Pounds.—Lord ! to think I should live to send out a Special Correspondent, all to my own cheek ! It's—a—a luxury I should never have anticipated."

"The Correspondent won't be much use without a war to correspond about," said Carolan, growing weary of Mr. Knewbit's humour. "And I suppose there won't be one now."

"We shall know for certain, I dare say, when you've thrown your eye over this paper here," said his patron, producing a crumpled oblong of pale green. "That it's addressed to another person ain't your business. I mean that person no injury—and naturally no more don't you. What you're asked to do is to English these words for me." He handed over the cablegram and expanded himself to hear. P. C. Breagh read with lifting eyebrows:

"*Lanze inden Schuh, Uhlan. Hauptquartier, Berlin.*"

"And what's that mean ? English it, can't you ?" snapped Mr. Knewbit, rabid with curiosity:

P. C. Breagh Englished it as requested.

"Lance in rest, Hussar. Headquarters, Berlin."

Said Mr. Knewbit later on, warming his calves despite the heat of the weather, at the low coke fire in the kitchen register, while Miss Ling bustled about clearing away the supper-cloth:

"That there cable was received in London at six-thirty this evening, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* Meguet quoted from was the latest issue—about eleven a.m. I shall go down early to the office to-night !"

His Excellency Field-Marshal General Count von Moltke had said that day, having dropped in at the Berlin Headquarters of the Reserve *Landwehr* for the purpose of perusing certain lists sent from London a few days pre-

viously by the Teutonic gentleman who taught English to German immigrants at the Institute in Berners Street, W.:

"It was an excellent idea of Colonel von Rosius to fish for missing Prussian conscripts and deserters from our *Landwehr* in the character of a teacher of English to foreigners in London. He has netted in a year, two thousand privates and non-commissioned officers, would-be waiters, clerks, porters, valets, and tradesmen—men of all ages, from forty to nineteen. A useful officer—a very intelligent officer. We shall make up much leakage in adopting his plan!"

In the dimly-gaslit murkiness of three o'clock in the morning Mr. Knewbit sallied forth to business, carrying his hat in his hand as he went, for the weather was oppressive, yet walking at his usual red-hot pace, and making as much noise with his boots as three ordinary men.

"I'm not in my usual mood for Nature," he said, on reaching the bottom of gray, grimy Endell Street, "and I flatter myself on being tough enough—at a pinch—to do without my customary dose of fresh air. So I'll twist down Long Acre and take the Drury Lane short-cut. Not that there is any special reason for hurry to-night."

Yet hurry seemed abroad to an observation as strictly professional as Mr. Knewbit's. Cabs rattled over the stones of the Strand, dashing Fleet Streetwards; panting messengers clutching envelopes dived under the horses' noses; hurried pedestrians carrying little black bags jostled Mr. Knewbit every moment; windows of offices glowed like furnaces, and the champing of steam-engines made a continual beat upon the ear.

"The last report from the late Debate in the Commons is in by now," said Mr. Knewbit, looking at his stout silver timekeeper, under a gas-lamp, "and Gladstone 'as made

short work of that last batch of Bills for the Session. Fee Fo Fum was nothing to 'im. Merchant Shipping, Ballot, Turnpikes, Inclosures—and a baker's dozen of Scotch Bills 'ave been offered up in a regular 'ecatomb, and anathemas 'ave been 'urled at the 'eads of the Opposition with the usual inspiritin' effect. The gentleman who is a-trying to put a stop to the employment of young children in Factories and Workshops 'as been put down with the powerful argument that the kids like their work, and would get up at four in the morning to do it for nothink if they wasn't paid for it. What a headin' I could make out of that! The stoker who was drivin' the engine to give the reg'lar driver a rest when the Carlisle Railway Disaster happened, has been released without a stain on 'is character, and complimented by the Committee on his 'umanity into the bargain. Mr. Bright is better, and will wake up the Board of Trade presently. That's all we shall have for our bill of fare this issue, includin' the City Correspondence, Sportin' Intelligence, Markets, Stocks, and state of the weather, Railway Shares, Law and Police reports, and Births, Deaths, and Marriages, and not leavin' out the new midsummer drama at Sadler's Wells Theatre or the letters written by gentlemen with grievances, signing theirselves 'Paterfamilias,' or 'Englishman,' or 'Verax,' who have been sauced by hackney-cab drivers or over-rated by the Income Tax, or overcharged for a cold-mutton, lettuce-salad and cheese luncheon in a country inn. That's all, and no more than bound to be! And yet I feel as if something was going to happen. I'm not due in my Department for another hour. I shall do a bit of a Look Round."

He entered by the swing-doors of the Fleet Street general entrance, meeting a rush of hot air, powerfully flavoured with gas and machine-oil, and was instantly borne off his feet by an avalanche of telegraph-agency messengers in oilskin caps and capes. The place was ablaze with gas,

shirt-sleeved men and grubby boys ran hither and thither like agitated insects. The walls shook with the panting of engines getting up steam. Perspiring printer-foremen shot in and out of little baking-hot glass offices where sub-editors were cutting down heaps of "flimsy," ramming sheets of copy on files, correcting proofs, and curtailing pars. . . .

Said Mr. Knewbit, fanning himself on a landing after climbing a great many iron-shod staircases, and passing in and out of a great many swing-doors emitting puffs of the hot gas-and-oil-perfumed air already mentioned, and leading to glass-roofed departments, where shirt-sleeved and aproned men laboured for dear life, and huge steam-power machines at high pressure trembled and panted like elephants gone mad:

"The Foreign Telegrams are in type and the Leaders are in the chases. The formes are in the machines, and in another minute the word will be given to Print. Halloa! Beg pardon, sir! I'm sure I didn't see you!"

For a little red-hot, perspiring gentleman had leaped up the staircase like a goat of the mountain, had charged at the swing-doors immediately behind Knewbit, collided with him, sworn at him breathlessly—and vanished with a double thud of the swing doors, and a shout of "Matheson!"

A clang of voices seemed to answer him, there was a brief minute's delay, ages as it seemed to the waiting Mr. Knewbit, than the mad elephants, unchained, began to heave and stamp and snort. And—at the rate of twenty-five thousand an hour, began to roll, from the great cylinders of damp paper, the day's issue of *The Early Wire*.

They rolled out—as similar cylinders were rolling up and down Fleet Street and all the world over, the Report of the late Debate in the Commons, the list of Bills beheaded by the Prime Minister, the ineffectual efforts of the gentleman

who was trying to stop the Factory Owners from employing Infant Labour, the result of the Commission of Inquiry upon the Carlisle Railway Disaster, and all the News of the day. And in a space reserved for the Latest Foreign Intelligence appeared a telegram sent from Ems by the King of Prussia, as condensed at a dinner-council of three convivials, in the Wilhelm Strasse, Berlin.

And all the world read it and commented, as British stocks went up and Continental Stocks played seesaw:

"The King of Prussia refuses to receive the French Ambassador! . . . This most certainly means WAR!"

XXV.

PERCHED on the wall,—hung with an old-world Chinese paper, figured with sprays of bamboo, pagodas, bridges, mandarins promenading under yellow umbrellas, and fair Celestials reclining on the banks of a meandering, bright blue stream—the German fly of Mr. Knewbit's envy would have reaped scant information from the conversation of the three men sitting at the dinner-table, for the reason that they conversed in English—perhaps for privacy's sake.

The apartment, not ordinarily used as a dining-room, possessed three sets of folding-doors, and beyond a sofa and twelve heavy chairs, upholstered with a Chinese brocade matching the paper, was scantily furnished. The table plate was solid and handsome. A pair of huge silver-gilt wine-coolers displayed a goodly array of champagne bottles, a cellar-basket with rows of horizontal wicker-nests contained claret, Burgundy, and Rhine wine. The second course was under discussion, but the servants, after placing the dishes on the table, had withdrawn. By

a bell kept on a dumb-waiter at the host's elbow, bearing sauces, clean plates, spare glasses, bread of white and black, and other requisites, the attendants could be summoned at need.

The hostess's chair at the table-head was vacant. The two guests' places were laid on the right and left hand of the host. All three men were in uniform, two were well stricken in years; and Time had not left sufficient locks among them to furnish a wig-maker with material for covering a bald patch.

Also, they were men of whom the world had heard much already, and was, before the ending of the year, to hear a great deal more.

The tall, heavily-built man of sixty-seven, in the uniform of a General of Division, who sat upon the host's right hand, boasting a hair-tuft above either ear, a pair of shaggy eyebrows, and a bristling moustache dyed to savage blackness, any intelligent Berliner would have recognised as von Roon, the Prussian Minister of War, while the mild-looking veteran of seventy who opposed him, displaying the crimson badge of the Great General Staff upon a plain dark close-buttoned military frock, with the ribbons of a dozen decorations showing in a narrow line on his left breast and the coveted Cross of the Red Eagle of the First Class hanging at the black regulation stock that clipped his unstarched linen collar, would have been claimed by the veriest street urchin as "Our Moltke!"

You saw in this hale, lean, stooping Staff Officer, who covered a scalp as bare as a new-born babe's with an obvious auburn wig, the first soldier of the day, the past-master in war-craft. His fine, transparent beaky profile, tight mouth, clear light eyes, set in a net of innumerable knowing little wrinkles, and the cross-hatching of tiny scarlet veins that made his hollow cheeks ruddy as Cornish apples,

might have belonged to some aged, ascetic Cardinal, or venerable Professor of Science, rather than to Baron Helmuth Carl Bernhard von Moltke, General, Field-Marshal, and Chief of the Great General Staff of the Prussian Army; whose heraldic motto, *Erst wägen dann wagen* summarises his strategical policy; whose conduct of the Danish War of '64 and the Austrian War of '66 had placed Prussia in the forefront as a military nation, under whose banner were soon to gather the Confederated German States.

Questioned as to the identity of the man at the head of the table—the long-limbed, heavily-moulded, powerfully-built personage of five-and-fifty, attired in the undress-uniform of a Colonel of White Cuirassiers, and wearing the Order of Commander of the Red Eagle, the citizen would most likely have scowled, the street-boy spat forth some unsavoury epithet, tacked on to a name that was destined to be inscribed upon the era in divers mediums, inclusive of marble and iron, brass and gold and silver; lead and fire; bright steel and red blood.

For this was the Minister to whom diplomats, Parliamentary orators, and political leader-writers referred when they mentioned Prussia ; the accursed of Ultramontanes, the abhorred of Socialists. Walking alone through the streets, as, indeed, he loved to do, his keen eye and huge physical strength had saved him, ere now, from the assassin's bullet or knife. And you could not look upon him without recognising a Force, all-potent for good or all-dominant in evil, an enemy to be execrated or a leader to be adored.

The massive, high-domed head was scantily covered, save for a grayish lock or so above either temple, and a thin thatching behind the finely-shaped, sagacious ears. The eyebrows were thick—of gray mixed with darkish brown; the luxuriant brown-gray moustache covering the

large, mobile, sarcastic mouth, grew heavily as any trooper's. The short, straight nose was rounded at the end like the point of a broadsword. And in the indomitable, vital regard of the blue eyes, partly hidden under thick and level lids, you felt the master-mind, as they coldly considered some question of finance or diplomacy, or blazed challenge and defiance, scorn and irony. And in the sagging orbital pouches, as in the puffy jowl, you read the unmistakable signs of bygone orgies, deep potations, marvellous vital powers taxed to the utmost in the past pursuit of pleasure, as by present indefatigable, unsleeping labours with brain, voice, and pen in the service of Throne and State.

The table-talk dealt chiefly, at first, with culinary and gastronomical matters. Asparagus soup iced and a clear soup with vermicelli had preceded the course of fish, placed on the table by the servants, who had then been dismissed. A huge dish of Waldbach trout with green sauce and another, as capacious, of crayfish stewed in cream with mushrooms, vanished before a double onslaught on the part of the War Minister and the Chancellor, the Chief of the General Staff partaking sparingly, as was his wont.

Said his host, smiling and setting down an empty wine goblet:

"You eat nothing, Herr Baron Field-Marshal, whereas I, who come of a family of great eaters, and His Excellency, who boasts a similarly inherited capacity, have taken twice of each dish."

"Thanks, thanks, dear Count," said Moltke mildly, glancing downwards at the well-marked hollow behind his middle buttons; "but I do not like to overload my stomach, particularly at my time of life."

"Being aware of Your Excellency's objection to dishes that are heavy," the Chancellor continued gravely, but still smiling, "I took pains to select a *menu* of light, easily-

digested things. What are three or four dozens of oysters at the commencement of a dinner ?"

Von Roon agreed, in a hoarse bass, that set the chandelier-glasses vibrating:

" Or a few half-pound trout, or a helping or so of stewed crayfish ? Mere nothings—to a strong digestion."

" Mine cannot be strong," the great strategist remarked modestly, " for I find that an over-plentiful meal oppresses the brain, and hinders steady thought."

Said the Chancellor, filling from a long-necked bottle one of the three large crystal goblets that served him as wine-glasses, emptying it at a draught and setting it down:

" Hah ! Were that known in a certain high quarter at Paris, what a cargo of delicacies you would presently receive from the Maison Chevet !"

Von Roon's big voice came in:

" Was not Chevet the Parisian purveyor who supplied the banker-minister Lafitte with fish for a Dieppe dinner in the time of the French Monarchy ?"

" So !" The Chancellor, holding his napkin delicately in both hands, dried the wine from his moustache, and added, turning his great, slightly bloodshot eyes upon the interrogator. " And who is now chief caterer for the Emperor Napoleon the Third." He added, glancing back at Moltke, and observing that his glass stood unemptied: " Since Your Excellency will not eat, let me recommend you the wine, which is of special quality. Not only Rüdesheim, but good Rüdesheim. Ha, ha, ha !"

The veteran's clear eyes became mere slits in the mass of puckered wrinkles. He pushed back his auburn peruke, showing his high-arched temples, and laughed, revealing gums as healthy as a child's, and still accommodating three or four staunch old grinders inclined at various angles, like ancient apple-tree stumps.

"*Nu, nu!* You are twitting me with my candour to Sultan Mahmoud in 1835; but what else could I say when Chosref Pasha intimated that His Sublimity required my opinion? Directly I tasted his wretched wine, I knew some rogue had sold him an inferior brand, and thus I told him honestly: 'It is Rüdesheim, Your Majesty, but it is not good Rüdesheim!' And with the first of the boxes of tobacco and cigarettes that came from Constantinople after my return to Germany, I received the message that the *tutun* was not only Turkish *tutun*, but good Turkish *tutun*." He drank off his wine, ending: "And so my nephews say it is, for I smoke neither cigarettes or pipes."

"I smoke pipes," said the Chancellor, stretching a white, muscular hand towards the bell on the dumb-waiter, "when my doctor prohibits cigars." He added: "Pipes of all materials and descriptions—one sort excepted. I have no doubt Your Excellency could give it a name."

The War Minister, pondering, knotted his heavy tufted eyebrows, and presently blew out his cheeks as a man may when the jest baffles his wit. The Field-Marshal began to laugh, a gentle chuckle that began by agitating his lean abdomen, and shaking his bowed but vigorous shoulders before it widened his mouth into a slit curved gaily at the corners, and squeezed tears of merriment out of his puckered eyes.

"I'll wager half a pfennig, I will name it at the first guess! You mean the Calumet of Peace!"

Von Roon barked out a laugh. The Chancellor nodded, smiling. Then two middle-aged, grave-looking male servants in plain black entered with the third course, and the faces of the diners underwent a curious change. They were more suave, and all expression seemed as though it had been wiped from them. Until, following on the heels of the servants (who brought the *entrées*) there appeared a colossal boarhound, dark tawny in colour, with black pointings,

short, rounded ears, massive chest, square muzzle, and red-rimmed eyes. Fixing these fierce orbs upon his master with an affection proved not altogether disinterested by the copious dribbling of his jaws, the great brute sat upright at his left hand, flogged the carpet with his heavy tail, and saluted the placing of the dishes on the table with three gruff barks.

"Aha, Tyras!"

"Hey, then, Tyras! So they have cut short your furlough, boy!"

"He would tell you, like that sergeant of infantry who was made postman of a country district after the war of '66, and at whom the illiterate population—who never got anything but bad news or dunning letters—used to shoot as a mild hint to keep away altogether, that all the days are field-days to him. Speaking as a dog with a master who walks when he does not ride, and must be waited for when he is neither riding or walking."

The Chancellor, smiling, looked at the huge brute, which rose and laid its massive jowl entreatingly upon his chair-arm, and receiving no immediate return in caress, lobbed a heavy forepaw pettishly upon the tablecloth. A chased silver-gilt salt-cellar, in the shape of a Bavarian peasant-girl carrying two milk-pails, toppled, and might have fallen to the floor, but that the Field-Marshal caught it dexterously, though without being able to prevent the salt being spilt.

"No harm done! See!" He triumphantly set the milkmaid in her place again: "Only the salt is spilled upon the cloth!"

"Now, if Tyras were superstitious!" commented the host, as a servant hastened to repair the damage with the aid of a napkin and a porcelain dessert-plate, "he would be convinced that Madame Tyras and her sons were not doing as well as might be hoped."

"The bitch has pupped, then?" said von Roon, as a trio of corks exploded; and the servants having carried round the dishes, placed them on the table, set an open bottle of champagne, dewy from the ice, and enveloped in a damask napkin, at the right of each diner, and noiselessly quitted the Chinese room.

As the door shut, the Chancellor continued, responding to Roon's question with a nod, and looking at the Chief of the Great General Staff:

"However, Tyras is not one of those nervous sires who rend heaven and earth with outcries if danger threatens one of their offspring. The Pomeranian breed are possibly less nervous than the strain at Sigmaringen. I think Prince Antony——"

Blurted out the Field-Marshal, bolting a mouthful of cutlet and crimsoning to the edges of his wig with sudden anger: "May the great devil fly away with that pompous old sheep's-head!"

"It was not without reason," said the Chancellor, without slackening in his onslaught upon an *entrée* of duckling stewed with olives, "that I arranged for us three to dine without the servants. Did I not foresee that the hot blood of the warlike youth would effervesce in some such expression as that I have just heard!"

Said the old man, still flushed, but laughing, and sipping at a bumper of dry Sillery:

"He is a sheep's-head, and a pompous one! He negotiates with Prim, as head of the Hohenzollern family, quite forgetting the King, it would appear! He is very well pleased—he thinks the place will suit his son capitally! He sends him on second thoughts to ask the King if he does not think so? Then when France hurries her Ambassador to Ems to inform the King, who has not said 'Ay' or 'Nay' in the matter, that she will not tolerate a Prince of Prussia on the Throne of Spain, he writes to the King

saying that he is much impressed by the turn things are taking at Paris, and though he thinks he cannot in decency break off the affair, perhaps the King will do it for him! Meanwhile Prince Leopold, who is the chief person concerned—where withdrawal or acceptance is in question—has quitted Ems and gone where you please. . . . Not to his parents' country castle of Sigmaringen, but to the Tyrol. . . . Now why to the Tyrol? This marching and countermarching—with no definite purpose in it, makes my blood boil. Phew!"

And really the perspiration fairly bubbled from the pores of the old warrior, as he took off his auburn peruke and mopped his dripping head and face with a large white handkerchief.

The Chancellor, who had been discussing a second helping of the dish before him, laid down his knife and fork upon their silver-gilt supporters, unfastened a hook of his undress frock, and said, withdrawing a small roll of tissue papers and separating one thin pencilled sheet from the rest:

"There is some reason for the Prince's agitation. This morning a telegram in cipher—of which this is a fair transcript—was despatched from Sigmaringen to Olozaga, the Spanish Ambassador at Paris. It conveys the intimation that Prince Antony withdraws from the candidacy in the name of Prince Leopold. It was sent by the French Emperor's secret agent, a Roumanian named Straz."

He went on, informing himself with a quiet side-glance to right and left, of the effect his communication was producing:

"Perhaps you do not know Straz—a man with the profile and curls of one of M. Layard's man-god bulls of Nineveh, a living tool that might have been tempered in the workshop of an Alexander Borgia, or a Catherine de Medici——"

He stopped to fill one of his great crystal goblets from

the champagne-bottle that stood beside him. Moltke, indifferent of the dishes that stood temptingly within reach, had been wiping the inside of his wig dry with his handkerchief. Now, oblivious of the wig, and crumpling it with the handkerchief into a ball, he was squeezing the ball between his narrow palms as he listened to the speaker. Von Roon, who had been busy upon some sweetbreads cooked in sour cream, paused in the act of helping himself again largely.

"So—so—this fellow—Straz——" The Chancellor stuttered now and then, and he did it here effectively—"This uns-scrupulous f-fellow of whom I am t-talking——" He drained the big glass to the dregs, wiped his moustache carefully, and began delicately unfolding more thin sheets of paper from the small but pregnant wad.

"Ah, yes, where was I? Th-this morning, the twelfth of July, the originals of these three telegrams, which are not in cipher, were sent from Sigmaringen by Prince Antony. The first, to Marshal Prim, at Madrid, withdraws his son from the candidacy. The second, to Olozaga, recapitulates the wording of this. The third, ostensibly addressed to the principal journals of Berlin and Germany, and to the German Submarine Telegraphic Agencies by order of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern, abandons all pretensions to the Spanish sceptre, and restores to Spain her freedom of initiative."

Von Roon bellowed like a nine-inch siege gun:

"What May-madness has the confounded old billy-goat?"

The Chief of the Great General Staff put on his wig, and said, folding his lean arms upon his sunken chest:

"How has he at Paris managed to frighten the old man?"

The Chancellor said, fixing his full, powerful eyes upon the light ones twinkling through their wise old puckers:

"The mission of M. Straz, privately sent, upon the advice

of the Duke de Gramont, by the Emperor of France to Sigmaringen, (while Count Benedetti repairs to the King of Prussia at Ems, and a third emissary, Bartholdi, is sent to menace President Zorilla at Madrid)—the mission of M. Straz is to terrify the Prince and Princess with threats of the assassination of one, if not both their sons."

Commented Moltke, shrugging a shoulder:

"To work on the woman, always—if there is one! . . . Badinguet's tactics are not new—but they are effective beyond doubt."

"Knave!" came from Roon, in a blurt of indignation.

"Says Straz to Prince Antony of Hohenzollern—I give you the exact words;—'Highness, His Imperial Majesty the Emperor authorises me to inform you, that a group of Roumanian conspirators are plotting against the life of your elder son, Prince Charles von Hohenzollern—now Charles of Roumania. The threads of this plot being centred in Paris, it is in the Emperor's power to sever them—he will do so if Prince Leopold withdraws from the candidature,—he will not seek to deter the conspirators, should the Prince prove obstinate. Reflect in addition that Prince Leopold, as King of Spain, will have to contend against the plots of Alfonsists and Carlists—as against the intrigues of Montpensier and other aspirants to Isabella's vacated throne. He will not be summoned to reign—he will be called to a disaster. Death will sit beside him, under the Royal canopy."

The reader's muscular white hands drew another crackling sheet from the little roll of papers. He went on:

"The mother of the two young men was present—as was intended—when Straz delivered this message from the Emperor. Naturally the Princess brought her batteries to work upon the Prince and her younger son, who, though it is not admitted, was actually present. She

has wept, implored, prayed, fainted, argued for forty-eight hours——"

The Field-Marshal muttered:

"Poor soul!"

And with his wrinkled hand he rubbed a glistening drop from his cheek, that was not perspiration. Von Roon snorted like a dyed old war-horse:

"Meanwhile, the Imperial Ambassador, Count Benedetti, will be setting forth the object of his mission to the King!"

Said the Chancellor, letting the words come out softly and distinctly,—and one would have expected so huge a man to roar after the fashion of giants, rather than to speak in such mellifluous tones:

"His instructions run thus: '*Say to the King that we have no secret motive, that we do not seek a pretext for war—and that we only ask to reach an honourable solution of a difficulty that was not created by us.*'"

"It is honourable, then," said von Moltke in a tone of childlike wonder, "to threaten to murder that old woman's two sons?"

"Meanwhile," said the mellifluous, pleasant voice of the Chancellor, "the Emperor and Marshal le Bœuf have sent Staff-Colonel Gresley to Algiers with secret orders to Mac-Mahon to embark those troops from Africa which are most available for service on the Continent, and to warn the most distant regiments to be at Algiers on the 18th. The Generals of his Artillery and Engineers have been despatched upon a plain-clothes confidential visit of inspection to the fortresses of the North-East, all leave has been stopped, and the commanders of brigades have apprised the staffs of the mobilisation offices to despatch the orders of recall of the reserves. This was put into effect on the 8th. Upon the same day the order was given to bring the Infantry regiments up to War strength by the creation of their Fourth

Battalions, and General Blondeau of the Administrative Branch of the War Department, has been authorised to exceed his credit by the sum of a million francs." He ended, showing his small, regular teeth, as he smiled agreeably upon his hearers: "The Tuileries system of Secret Intelligence is certainly excellent, but I do not think we are so badly served!"

"Badly served!" echoed Roon. "One would say not!"

"You must be served by the great devil himself and all his devilkins, Otto, my dear fellow!" said the Chief of the Great General Staff, with a merry chuckle, "to have all this dished up to you before it is cold! Well, well! Thanks be to the good God—we are not so far behind these French as we might be! No, no! not at all so far behind! . . ."

He said this musingly, his startlingly limpid eyes almost hidden by the wrinkles and puckers, his long, humorous upper lip drawn down and set firmly on the lower one, as he cupped his sharp chin in the palm of one wrinkled hand, nursing the elbow appertaining to it in the palm of the other hand.

"'So far behind,' do you say?" growled von Roon. "*Sapperlot!* I should call it a day's march and a half-day's march ahead!"

"It may be—it may be!" said the Field-Marshal placidly. "God grant that it prove so!"

"You are as pious as the King to-night," said the Chancellor, laughing heartily. "And your God is the God of Battles, we all know!"

"Yes, yes, the Friend Above does not forget this old fellow!" said the Field-Marshal simply. "The thousand-ton Krupp gun—whose acquaintance the Parisians made at the Exposition of 1867,—has been waiting ever since to make upon them an impression of a different kind! Like the gun, I have *bided my time*, as the Scotch say. Neither

the cannon or myself will last for ever, but to worry is folly! . . . Heaven will not let us rust upon the shelf!"

"'*Mensch ärgere Dich nicht*' is a good proverb," said the Chancellor, "not only for Your Excellency! Chained to my study-table all yesterday and this morning,—horribly handicapped by the absence of my First Secretary Abeken, who is doing duty with the King at Ems,—listening to reports, receiving showers of telegrams, dictating replies in answer to the appeals or expostulations of Foreign Ministers —sending instructions to Ambassadors, and drinking Mühlbrunnen water,—which must not be taken when one is vexed or worried, if one wants it not to play the very devil in one's inside, I chewed the cud of that proverb, '*Man, do not vex thyself!*' to keep myself from gnawing my tongue. That official international threat of Gramont, uttered in the session of the Corps Législatif of July 6th, —the filth hurled by the Paris Press—did not cost me a sleepless night. But that after such insults, the King of Prussia should treat with Benedetti at Ems while the Prussian Foreign Minister remained at Varzin—stuck in my gizzard as though I had swallowed a prickle-burr. It was worse than Olmütz. . . . I saw nothing but resignation ahead of me!"

Von Roon agreed:

"To me also it seemed a slight, not to the Foreign Minister alone—but to His Majesty's Government in your person."

The Field-Marshal added, his wrinkled face lengthening dourly: "I may tell you—there being no ladies present!—the whole affair acted on me like unripe gooseberries, especially after reading that sentence in the *Gaulois*, written by a *gamin* with a finger to his nose. . . ."

Von Roon thundered: "'*La Prusse cane!*' Only say black-dose, rather than sour gooseberries, and there you have the effect of the words on me!"

Said the Chancellor, with a twinkle of humour:

"They wrought upon myself as an emetocatharsis. For, repudiating the slight, and simultaneously expelling from my system the last remains of compunction, I decided then and there to hurry off from Varzin to Ems for the purpose of urging upon His Majesty the urgent necessity for summoning the Reichstag. The words I meant to use kept drumming in my skull—*We shall be traitors to ourselves if we do not accept this challenge. Without an instant's delay, we must mobilise!*"

Said Roon:

"Why not, when we are prepared to take measures for the safety of the Rhenish provinces? We can put Saarbrück in a state of defence in twenty-four hours, and Mainz in less than forty-eight. Is it not so, Herr General Field-Marshal?"

Von Moltke's dry, level voice returned quietly:

"My plan of invasion was drawn up in 1868. All my arrangements are made, as I have said. When His Majesty —when the Chancellor of the Confederation, and Your Excellency give the signal—I go home to my quarters on the first floor of the south-east wing of the Great General Staff Department, and despatch a telegraphic message of three words . . ." He began to laugh, rubbing his hands together. "Then—you will see whether I am ready! All I ask is Opportunity—like Krupp's thousand-tonner gun!"

XXVI.

The Chancellor said, emptying another bumper of champagne:

"This morning the opportunity lay within grasp. So strongly convinced was I of this that as my phaeton passed through the village of Wussow, on the way to the station,

'War is Inevitable' seemed written on every house. The old clergyman stood before his parsonage door and greeted me with a hand-wave. My answer was the gesture of a thrust in *carte* and *tièrce*. For me the three words: 'War is Declared' replaced the lettering of the advertisement posters on the walls of the stations the special rushed through. Yet, though I had notified His Majesty of the advisability of summoning me to his assistance, I received, even as I stepped out of the train at the Stettin Station, a vacillating telegram from him, enjoining delay." He added, laughing: "Together with a message in cipher from our Prussian Ambassador at Paris, informing me that it has been given forth from the tribune of the Corps Législatif that had not Prince Leopold retreated from the Spanish candidature. to prevent the war with which the Emperor threatens us—the Government of Napoleon III. would have extorted a letter of apology from the King."

Roon could not speak. Said Moltke: "The Gallic cock crows loudly! Such a letter would nicely recoup France for the humiliation of Sadowa."

"Did France succeed in extorting it," retorted the Chancellor, "but she has got to get it first!"

The forehead of Roon was black as thundercloud. He unhooked his collar, and wiped his congested face. The Field-Marshal thrust his hand under his wig perplexedly, saying:

"That His Majesty should continue to treat with Benedetti after all these insults and outrages. . . . It passes my understanding, I am fain to confess!"

"The Count himself would have no difficulty in reading the riddle," said the Chancellor, shrugging. "He is—according to his own conviction—a diplomat of the first water, a statesman of infinite finesse and irresistible persuasions. Yet he did not coax us into the Emperor's trap in 1867. Speaking of that, I have in my pocket something

that will presently jump out of it, a testimony in his own handwriting that he is not quite so clever a fellow as he thinks!"

"To-day," boomed Roon, "I met Prince Gortchakoff. We were riding in the Unter den Linden when he stopped. He spoke of the King's age—the merest allusion in reference to a site he pointed out as being suitable for a statue. His Majesty was to be represented holding a wreath of laurel with the dates of 1864 and 1866 upon it. Whilst emblematical figures of Peace, and the Genius of the Domestic Hearth, were shown disarming him of his helmet and sword."

"A sneer thoroughly merited," said the Chancellor, "by these days of hesitation!" He added: "The Genius of the Domestic Hearth is for the moment at Coblenz. However, wifely expostulations can be conveyed by telegram. Her Majesty's cry is, '*Remember Jena and Tilsit and avoid war, even at the cost of national dishonour!*' Should these entreaties of the Queen prevail, she will merit the reproof of Sir Walter Scott—I think it was Sir Walter Scott!—who addressed to his greyhound, Maida, who had torn up—unless I err?—the manuscript of a newly-completed novel. '*Poor thing! thou little knowest the injury thou hast done!*'"

"Women are less reasonable," declared von Roon, "than bitches, to my mind!"

"Nay, nay!" said the Field-Marshal with sudden anger. "Maida was not a bitch, and I cannot agree with you! Great and noble female characters have been, and exist now—not only in the pages of history-books. It may be that Her Majesty is prejudiced—her influence has not always been favourable to the adoption of measures I would have counselled. But she is high-minded!—a great lady, and truly devoted as a wife. And with this ring upon my finger"—he held up his wrinkled left hand and showed the narrow band of gold—"it would ill become

me to sit still and hear women likened to the unreasoning beasts that perish, when for all I know my beloved wife Mary is standing by my side !"

He drank a sip of wine, and continued more mildly:

"The good God took her to Himself twelve years ago, in the fulness of life and strength and English beauty !—whilst I, more than thirty years her senior, hang yet upon the tree. On the top of the hill at Crusau is her tomb, where one day I shall lie beside her. But before that day" —the brave old eyes snapped fire, and he wrinkled up his ancient eagle-beak as though he savoured the fumes already—"it may be that I shall smell powder again !"

"Let us drink to that !" said the Chancellor. As they filled their glasses there came a peculiar, scratching knock on the door.

"Come in, Bucher !" cried the host harshly, and the summons was answered by one of His Excellency's Privy Councillors of Legation, a little, stooping old gentleman, with a large hooked nose and a grizzled moustache and whiskers, who was dressed in a chocolate-coloured, single-breasted, frock coat, tightly fastened with gilt buttons, and who wore a black satin stock, with the tongue of the buckle sticking up among the locks at the back of his neck, and baggy black cloth trousers ending in the feet of a Prussian Lifeguard, encased in huge and shapeless cloth boots; these moved him noiselessly to the elbow of the Chancellor, to whom he whispered, handing him a card, large and square, and unmistakeably feminine:

"And so, as Madame was urgent . . . Your Excellency knows what women are !"

"Thanks to some early studies in feminality, I am credited," said the Chancellor, "with knowing a great deal too much about the sex. Where have you put Madame ?"

Bucher answered, raising himself on his toes to approach

his lips to the large, well-shaped ear; for even seated, the Chancellor overtopped him :

"In the gracious Countess's little red damask back-drawing room."

"It is doubtful, my good Bucher, whether—did she know how she was honoured—the gracious Countess would welcome her visitor."

"Alas ! Your Excellency !" pleaded the Councillor, "but Her Excellency does not know !—and the room contains nothing valuable. Only a few family pictures—no china, silver, or *bric-à-brac*. Nothing that it would be any use to steal !"

"Come, come !" expostulated the Minister, his blue eyes alight with cynical amusement, "you must not speak of Madame as though she were a house-thief. Our good Bucher," he went on, turning jestingly to his table companions, "sees little difference between a person who picks brains for pay, and sells the pickings, and another person who picks locks and steals silver vases and cups. Rather a reflection on the Diplomatic Service, now I think of it !"

"*Ach ! Herr Gott !*" said the Councillor in alarm, "I cast no reflection, Your Excellency knows it ! Only the woman is of light reputation——"

"And may be light-fingered into the bargain. Possibly——" said the Chancellor, "and all the better if she be so ! We will risk my wife's family portraits in her vicinity until after dinner. Have coffee and liqueurs sent to her, and beg her to wait a while." He added, "Let them put cigarettes on the tray—I have no doubt she smokes tobacco. And as the smell will have passed off before my wife and daughter return from Varzin, neither of the ladies will ever know of the desecration of the red damask back-drawing room."

And as Bucher shuffled out of the room to execute his errand, his Chief rang the bell for the third course.

"By the way, Excellency," said the War Minister, as the demure servants out of livery removed the empty dishes: "that Frenchwoman of poor Max Valverden's is driving about Berlin."

"So!" commented the host, turning an inscrutable face upon the Minister. "She must find it very warm, and insufferably dull."

"She consoled herself," said Roon, "not long after Count Max's sui cide."

"There," burst out the Field-Marshal, "was an incomprehensible catastrophe! That young man—who was military *attaché* at our Embassy in Paris until the return of the Allied Armies of Great Britain and France from the Crimea in 1856; and in 1866, ten years later, joined my staff in Austria as third *aide-de-camp*—I cannot understand it—he must have been demented!"

He unbuttoned the frock-coat, showing an unstarched, but scrupulously clean white shirt and vest of white nankeen, and taking a little silver snuff-box from his waistcoat pocket, laid it down carefully upon the tablecloth, as he said:

"In '56 he brought his mistress from Paris with him—he was infatuated with her spirit and beauty. They said she was the wife of an officer in Grandguerrier's Division, who had served throughout the whole of the War in the Crimea."

"A *chef d'escadron* of Mounted Chasseurs, who seems to have taken his wife's desertion philosophically," commented the Chancellor.

The Field-Marshal took a pinch of snuff, and gravely shook his head.

"Of that I know nothing, but there was no meeting. Max Valverden assured me, on his honour, that an opportunity for the challenge had been given. Otherwise the young Count could not have continued in our Prussian

Army—one would naturally have been obliged to retire him." He sneezed and went on: "My personal acquaintance with Valverden began ten years later. He served me —excellently. One should always give due praise to the dead. But when he returned from Austria—then happened the tragedy, at Schönfeld in the Altenwald, where lies his patrimonial property, and where the lady waited. And—he shot himself, upon the very night of his return to her."

"Not," interposed the cool, level voice of the Chancellor, "not being expected until noon of the day following."

"Of that I know nothing," said Moltke, turning his ascetic, hairless face full upon the speaker. "What I know is that an officer who faithfully served his country and whom I had recommended for distinction, at the earliest opportunity—died by his own hand! How the woman was left, I cannot tell you."

"Count Maximilian von Schön-Valverden had provided for Madame de Bayard when summoned upon active Service," said the Chancellor. "His family did not contest the will, and she is not badly off. Therefore," he added with a smile, "when she condescends to serve my Intelligence Department as a spy, you may suppose she does not do it too cheaply. I must refer to my perambulating ledger, Bucher, before I quote you the exact figures of the sum I am to hand her to-night. She is a true daughter of the horseleech, who cries '*Give, give, give!*' incessantly. But all the same I am indebted to her, for those remarkably interesting particulars concerning the Mission of M. de Straz to Prince Antony."

"So!" ejaculated Von Roon in astonishment. The Field-Marshal rubbed his chin and turned his clear eyes upon the speaker, who went on smilingly:

"M. de Straz is susceptible—a fatal fault in a conspira-

tor. Madame is still seductive, with a figure like Circe, ropes of black silk hair, a skin of cream, though the roses are bought ones ! and eyes the colour—exactly the colour of old, pale tawny port. Now, when you reflect that she is waiting in my wife's red boudoir to interview me in my next spare moment—do you fear for my hitherto unassailable virtue, or regard me as proof against such charms ?"

" I never bet more," said Moltke, " than half a pfennig, and then only when I play cards with my niece."

" I will wager you proof," cried Roon, " for two hundred thalers !"

" I can hardly bet upon my own marital infidelity !" said the Chancellor, laughing, as a servant uncovered the dish newly placed before him. " Will Your Excellency take some of this ?"

' This ' was the savoury *pièce de résistance* of the masculine banquet, a lamb of six weeks, roasted to a golden brown, basted with marrow, and surrounded with tiny cucumbers stuffed with seasoning.

Moltke accepted the offer with alacrity, indifferent to the charms of veal with tomatoes and aubergines. Von Roon declining, hurled himself upon a fillet of beef *jardinière*, and hacked a huge steak from its surface as with a sword, rather than a carving-knife. The Chancellor, plying his gleaming weapons delicately, liberally supplied his guest and piled his own plate, saying as he launched himself upon its contents with unabated appetite:

" Confederations may disappoint us—Kings may deceive us—while our teeth and our digestions faithfully serve us, we can find some zest in life. When I retire, I shall cultivate vegetables, plant forest-trees, rear trout, breed cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry—drop my hereditary patronymic as I shed my titles of office, and be known to all posterity as the Farmer of Varzin !"

The hall-bell had been heard to ring a moment pre-

viously. There was another scratching signal on the door, and Bucher appeared, manifestly excited and carrying a telegraphic despatch.

"What now ?" asked the Chancellor, finishing a mouthful.

"A telegram from Ems——" began the Councillor:

The imperious hand whipped it from between his pudgy fingers; the masterful voice demanded, as the envelope was rent open:

"The decipherer has not left ?"

"Excellency, no !" twittered the Councillor, agitated by the portentous frown of his Chief, and by the grave faces of Moltke and Roon. The paper was thrust back to him with the curt order:

"Get this deciphered—do not delay !"

And as the Legation Councillor vanished, Bismarck said with a short laugh, bending his powerful regard on the gaunt, black stare of the War Minister:

"It is from the King, and will not please us. We may make up our minds beforehand to that. Yet I drink this glass to the honour of Prussia !" And filling his great bumper glass from a fresh bottle that had been placed at his elbow, he gulped down at least a pint of the creaming nectar of the Widow Clicquot, and his guests in smaller measures, pledged the same toast. After that they sat in silence, the Chancellor alone continuing to eat with appetite—until the Councillor's big feet came shuffling back again.

"The copy, Excellency, 200 groups altogether," he began, "signed by the Herr Privy Councillor von Abeken, at His Majesty's command."

The papers he held were whipped away from him. The Chancellor read—and his countenance most grimly altered. His brows grew thunderous, trenches dug themselves along his forehead, caves appeared about his blazing eyes, and

the pouches under them portentously bagged. The heavy moustache might shade the mouth and chin, but could not hide that they were changed to granite. He passed his firm hand over them and said, his incisive tones veiled with a curious hoarseness:

"Mr. Councillor of Legation, you will now leave us. When I ring the bell it summons you. Pray tell Dr. Busch that his services will be needed. Some articles must be written for the press to-night."

He said, as the door closed behind Bucher, and the smile that accompanied the words was grim and cynical:

"Well, gentlemen, we have got our final slap in the face! The Press organs of the Ultramontanes and the Democrats will call us by our nicknames to-morrow: 'Old Hellfire' and 'Death's Chess-Player' and 'The Pommeranian Ogre' and all the rest. But—I swear to you that no enemy of mine will ever despise me as I now despise myself!"

Roon and Moltke regarded him in silence. He went on speaking, still with that strange hoarseness:

"Some have called me the Iron Chancellor. I will tell you by what title Wilhelm the First of Prussia will go down to posterity. Men will speak of him as the Fluid King. It is written in the Scriptures,—all day the phrase has haunted me,—'*Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel!*'"

At a glance from the War Minister, Moltke rose up suddenly. His stooping scholar's body sprang upright as a lance. He said, and the words rang clear as steel on steel:

"Your Excellency, I deplore the necessity of imposing silence upon you. But the obligation of my military oath, and your own——"

He paused as the great figure of his host reared up at the head of the table. He saluted the Field-Marshal and said coldly:

"Herr General Field-Marshal, the rebuke is merited.

Holding the King's commission as Colonel of White Cuirassiers of the Landwehr, I have spoken treasonably. Does your Excellency wish me to ring for my sword ?"

Moltke's wrinkled face flashed into amusement, as the Chancellor imperturbably stretched his hand to the bell beside him. He said, laughing:

"Colonel Count von Bismarck-Schönhausen, I accept your apology. I will limit the period of your arrest to confinement to this room until conclusion of dinner, on condition that you read now this message from Ems."

The Chancellor saluted, and glancing at Roon, who was now standing, gloomy and downcast. "We look," he said, "like three mourners about a bier. It is, in fact, Prussia who lies dead upon the table. However, judge of the situation for yourselves."

And he read out the famous telegram handed in at Ems at three-thirty:

"*Count Benedetti spoke to me on the Promenade in order to demand from me finally, in a very important manner, that I should authorise him to telegraph at once to Paris that I bound myself for all future time never again to give my consent if the Hohenzollerns should renew their candidature. I refused at last somewhat sternly, as it is neither right or possible to undertake engagements of this kind* a tout jamais. *Naturally I told him that I had received no news ; and as he was earlier informed from Paris and Madrid than myself, he could clearly see that my Government once more had no hand in the matter.*"

"Ei-ei !" broke in Moltke, "'*Somewhat sternly*' . . . '*Naturally I told*' . . . '*Neither right or possible,*' and then '*no hand in the matter !*' Do I hear the King—or have my ears played tricks on me ?"

"*Kreuzdonnerwetter !*" exploded Roon. "Well might one ask 'Is this the master or the servant speaking ?' But go on, go on, I pray your Excellency !"

The reader had transformed his face to an expressionless mask that might have been wrought in stone or metal. Now the tell-tale huskiness of fierce emotion cleared from his voice. He resumed:

"This closes His Majesty's personal communication. Herr Privy Councillor Abeken continues to the end."

Said Moltke: "Let us hear what little Abeken has got to say to you."

The cold, incisive voice recommenced reading:

"'*His Majesty commands me to inform you that he has since received a letter from the Prince. His Majesty having told Count Benedetti that he was awaiting news from the Prince, has decided, upon the representation of Count Eulenburg and myself, not to receive Count Benedetti again, but only to let him be informed through an aide-de-camp that His Majesty has now received from the Prince confirmation of the news Benedetti has already received from Paris, and has nothing further to say to the Ambassador. His Majesty leaves it to Your Excellency whether Benedetti's fresh demand and its rejection should not be at once communicated both to our Ambassadors and to the Press representatives.*'"

The close of the Royal communication plopped into a pool of silence. The Chancellor coughed, and said with his characteristic stutter:

"The-the laxity and diffuseness of the verbiage of this despatch l-lul-leave me in no doubt as to the favourable effect the Ems waters have already wrought upon the constitution of His Majesty!"

Roon barked his laugh. Moltke raised his thoughtful head from his breast and said laconically:

"It gives me the belly-ache to listen to such rubbish. Are we German men or German mice?"

The Chancellor shrugged and said:

"More than ever it is clear that my position is untenable. The King, under pressure of threats mingled with en-

treaties, has permitted himself to be heckled by the Emperor's Franco-Italian emissary. He ignores my urgent request that he should refer Benedetti to his Foreign Minister. Now, by the medium of an inferior official, he tells me that I may acquaint the representatives of the State and the Press—that nothing is settled and no definite end in view! What is settled is, that I resign!"

Von Roon called out harshly, striking a sinewy fist upon the table:

"Your Excellency will not leave your friends in this extremity?"

Moltke turned to him half whimsically, half pleadingly:

"For our sake, Otto, stick by the old waggon!"

The Chancellor said, with a sudden softening of the grim lines of his strong face, and in the eyes that had been fixed and expressionless:

"You talk, both of you, like two babes in the wood. As far as regards my personal influence to sway the King or control the feeling of the Reichstag—another hand may guide the State as well as this of mine. Yet, were it possible—having already the King's permission—to produce a somewhat concentrated version of this verbose telegram . . . Has either of you a pencil?—mine has been mislaid . . ."

"Here, take mine!" said the Field-Marshal eagerly.

The Chancellor took the offered pencil with a brief nod of thanks, swept the silver-gilt milkmaid ruthlessly aside, and spreading the forms containing the Royal despatch on the space she had occupied, pored over them for a moment, frowning heavily, before the red-chalk crayon began to play its part. Words were struck out—then whole sentences . . .

"Ah, ah!" said Moltke, beaming. "He has finished at last. Now let us hear what it sounds like with its mane cropped and its tail docked?"

"Reduced," said the Chancellor, lifting his great eyes from the red-crayoned papers, "without addition or alteration, the message might run thus . . ."

He read:

"*After the news of the renunciation of the hereditary Prince of Hohenzollern had been officially communicated to the Imperial Government of France by the Royal Government of Spain, the French Ambassador at Ems further demanded of His Majesty the King that he would authorise him to telegraph to Paris that His Majesty the King bound himself for all future time never again to give his consent should the Princes of Hohenzollern renew their candidature.*"

"Good, very good!" growled Roon.

"That seems to me excellent!" said Moltke, twinkling.

The Chancellor finished:

"*His Majesty the King thereupon decided not again to receive Benedetti, the French Ambassador, and sent the aide-de-camp on duty with the information that His Majesty had nothing further to say to him!*"

"*Bravo, bis!*" roared Roon.

"Why," said Moltke, rubbing his hands delightedly, "now it has a different ring altogether. Before it sounded like a parley. Now it is a fanfare of defiance! Sentences like these are worthy of a King!"

"And there can be no accusations of falsification," said the Chancellor, bending his powerful regard upon his two colleagues. "The Bund Chancellor carries out what the Prussian monarch commands. He communicates this text by telegraph to all our Embassies and to the Press agencies. Is it his fault if its published words provoke the Gallic cock to show fight?"

"I understand," said the War Minister joyfully, "that we should be the party attacked first. And we shall be, and we shall win! Our God of old lives, and will not let us perish!"

"Has Your Excellency nothing to say to me?" asked the Chancellor, fixing his great eyes on the face of Moltke, now radiant with childlike happiness.

"Were I a poet," returned the joyous old artist in war, seizing the hand outstretched to him across the table, and wringing it between both his own, "I should crown you with a wreath of laurel inscribed '*Hail to thee, Guardian of Prussia's honour!*' or something of that kind. Being what I am, I say that you are what my English nephews would call '*a trump!*' As you said this morning when you quitted Varzin, 'War Is Inevitable!'" He added, hitting himself a resounding thump in the chest: "And if I may but live to lead our armies in such a war—then the devil may come directly we have conquered these Frenchmen and fetch away this crumbling old carcass!" He added, with a change to gravity: "I do not say my soul, for I am a decent Christian. Hey, look here, our dinner has got cold!"

It was true; the viands were stagnant in the dishes. The fillet sat in the centre of a stagnant lake of congealed gravy; the roasted lamb, reduced by the onslaughts of the Chancellor to a partial skeleton, was covered with a frosting of rich white fat. He said, with a laugh that clattered against walls and ceiling like a discharge of musketry, and reaching for the bell that would summon Bucher:

"It does not matter; my cook has always a second *menu* ready in case of delays or accidents. Whilst Bucher communicates to our Embassies and the European Press Agencies the concentrated essence of His Majesty's telegram —while hundreds of thousands of handbills are being printed that shall disseminate the text throughout Germany, and Busch writes the articles that shall put the needful complexion on this affair—we will order up the Moët and Chandon White Star—I am thirsty after so much talking! —and eat our dinner again!"

XXVII.

EVER since the King, returning from the baths of Ems, had been met at the railway-station by his Under-Secretary of State bearing France's declaration of war,—a huge, orderly crowd, compact of all classes and callings, had ceaselessly rolled through the streets of Berlin, chanting with its thousands of sturdy lungs "*Heil dir im Siegerkranz*" and the "*Wacht am Rhein*" until its patriotic fervour reached a state of ebullition only to be relieved by volleys of cheers.

Jammed in the solid mass of bodies blackening the Unter den Linden and packing the Opera-Platz to suffocation,—until the bronze equestrian statue of the Great Friedrich, opposing the eastern courtyard gateway of the small stuccoed Palace,—reared above a tossing sea of heads — P. C. Breagh tasted the raptures of emancipation from the mill-round, and drank in news at every pore.

For this was life in earnest. . . . With the red-hot cigar-end of a corpulent merchant burning the back of his neck, and the crook of a market woman's blue-cotton umbrella imperilling his left eye; while the sword-hilt of a gigantic Sergeant of Uhlans insinuated itself between his third and fourth ribs on the right side, and the huge flaxen chignon of a servant-girl, armed with a capacious market-basket crammed with meat, fish, and vegetables for family consumption, bobbed itself into his mouth whenever he opened that feature to cheer, or gasp for air, heavily burdened with the fumes of beer, schnaps, herring-salad, garlic, sauer-kraut, and perspiring humanity, he was happier than ever he had been before.

The King, it was said, was holding a council with his Ministers and Generals in his study on the ground-floor of his Palace looking on the Opera-Platz. Presently His Majesty might be expected to come out.

The tall, elderly, white-whiskered officer in the undress uniform of the Prussian foot-guards—a blue tunic with red facings, silver buttons and epaulettes—had already appeared upon the balcony of a window overlooking the Linden, and touched his spiked helmet in response to the frenzied acclamations of his scarlet, perspiring subjects, whose staring eyes and open mouths a Berlin dust-storm was filling with peppery grit.

Presently the King had moved back into the room behind him, and returned with the Queen, a tall, thin, elegant lady in half-mourning, who was weeping; people said, because she hated the thought of war, and had besought her husband, on her knees, to truckle to the Napoleon at Paris, and thus avert hostilities.

When the royal couple had retired amidst plaudits of a somewhat less enthusiastic kind, the people had demanded the Crown Prince; and the King had stepped out yet again with his hand on the shoulder of the heir-apparent, a tall and stalwart man of thirty-nine, with a clear red-and-white complexion, setting off his well-cut features, kindly blue eyes, and flowing beard of yellow-brown.

Unser Fritz!—his manly good looks and the Order of Merit shining on his general's uniform had provoked fresh outbursts of patriotic enthusiasm, in which the gray-powdered foliage of the overrated linden-trees, limply resting during a sudden lull of the dust-storm, had been wildly agitated, and the very street-lamps had rocked.

But when the King, turning to his heir, gave him his hand,—when the son, reverently bending, raised it to his lips, and the father with manifest emotion, embraced him,—there had fallen a silence of sympathetic emotion. . . Then the great martial figure had reared erect again, and stepping to the front of the balcony, had shouted to the people:

"*Krieg! Mobil!*"
"Mobilisation! . . . War! . . ."

All the shouting that had gone before was no more than the squealing of a kindergarten compared with the mighty roar that greeted these two pregnant words! The scorching, dusty blue sky-dome, now tinged with sandy-pink sunset towards the Brandenburg Gate, seemed to quiver with the upward rush of it. And—not by accident—from the forest of flagstaffs mounted on the Palace, the Opera House, and the buildings contingent,—as down the whole length of the Linden to the Ministerial palaces of the Wilhem Strasse,—the black-and-white Flag of Prussia and the Hohenzollern banner of white with the black eagle and the cross of the old Teuton Order, broke and fluttered on the sandy breeze.

The National Anthem broke out once more, and the war-song, "*Ich bin ein Preusse.*" The King retired on his son's arm, manifestly overcome with weariness. Still the vast crowd of heated faces, set with shining eyes, and holed with roaring mouths, persistently turned towards those ground-floor windows of the Palace. *Something more yet!* asked all the gaping mouths and staring eyes.

But the blinds of the monarch's study were pulled down, unmistakably signifying that all was over for the present. . . . The central valves of the great gilded Palace gates were now shut, leaving open only the smaller carriage-way, through which mounted *aides* and orderly officers conveying despatches presently began to stream. The carriages of Ministers and other State officials followed these, while lesser personages, emerging from the exit left for pedestrians, began to hail cab-drivers from the stand of hackneys on the Linden side of the Opera House. Swearing, the frustrated Jehus of these vehicles laid about them with

their whips in the endeavour to force their animals through the solid crowd. . . .

A man went down under the hoofs of a wretched Rosinante. There were cries for "Police!" and spiked helmets appeared in the crowd. It surged and swayed. . . . The guardians of the law had drawn their cutlasses and were beating their fellow-children of the Fatherland upon their heads with the flat of these weapons, in the effect to attempt a junction between the cabs and those who wished to hire them. Thus the pressure on the flanks, ribs and breast-bone of P. C. Breagh became suffocating. Lifted from his feet, he was carried backwards and forwards by rushes, growing less certain of his own identity as the roaring in his ears became louder. Just as his eyelids dropped and he passed out of his own knowledge, a powerful hand caught him by the coat-collar, and a solid rampart of human flesh interposed between his lately-drifting body and the waves of the human sea that raged beyond.

Gulping, P. C. Breagh became aware that he was spread-eagled against the railings of the Palace courtyard facing the Unter den Linden, and that a big man in a loose black waterproof rain-cloak and broad-leaved black felt hat was holding to a railing on each side of him and warding off the rushes.

"Th-thanks! I'm tremendously obliged! . . ." he was beginning, when the swish of the cutlasses and the shrieking of the cutlassed drowned his voice. Yet another voice, masculine, resonant, and imperious, dominated all others: it cried:

"The King commands the police to sheath their swords!"

And upon the instant lull in the tumult that followed came another order:

"His Majesty has work to do for the Fatherland. Let the people disperse quietly to their homes!"

And the crowd, pacified and quieted, answered, "We

will so !" in a crashing volley of Teutonic gutturals, and began to split up and move away in sections, singing "*Heil dir im Siegerkranz*" in sonorous unison. When through the Palace gates came a small and shabby brougham drawn by a venerable bay, and driven by an elderly coachman in gray-and-black livery, the sight of whose military cockade evoked another whirlwind of enthusiasm. . . .

"Moltke ! It is our Moltke !" men shouted to one another, and the old General, who sat alone in the carriage, the lean, stooping septuagenarian in the spiked helmet, whose thin, ascetic face was rosy with suppressed excitement, and whose pale blue eyes twinkled good-humouredly between their narrow lids at the seething ocean of humanity in which the shabby brougham laboured, saluted in acknowledgment of the cheers.

"Moltke ! Long live our Moltke ! But where has Otto got to ?" hiccupped an alcoholic seaman, clutching the ledge of the brougham window. He continued in the midst of a silence born of consternation: "What has become of the Big Pommeranian ? We would have—hic !—carried him home shoulder-high for this week's—hic !—work he has done !"

Zealous hands dragged the presumptuous speaker back, as the venerable expert in war doffed his spiked helmet, and said, popping his auburn-wigged head out of the brougham window:

"Where Count Bismarck is needed there he will be, depend on it ! Now, children, let me get back to my maps !"

"Tell us first how things are going in France yonder ?" bellowed another Berliner, and the great Field-Marshal answered, pointing the jest with his keenest twinkle:

"You want to know how things are going there ? Well, the wheat has suffered from the drought, but acorns and potatoes promise to be plentiful, and pumpkins will be big this year !"

And the crowd, splitting with laughter, made way for the brougham of the Chief of the General Staff, and the joke was sown broadcast over Germany before the end of half an hour. For were not Moltke's acorns the oblong, round-ended bullets of the Prussian needle-gun, as his potatoes were the shrapnel shell cast by the six-pounder steel breech-loaders designed by Krupp for the Prussian field-artillery, and the big pumpkins the seventeen-pound projectiles fired by the siege-guns of nine centimetres' bore ? . . .

The massive ribs that had acted as buffers between P. C. Breagh and the battering onslaughts of the crowd shook with laughter as the brougham moved on through a lane that continuously opened in the mass of bodies and closed when it had passed. . . . Then their owner settled the wide-leaved felt hat more firmly on his head, and said in well-bred, fluent English, turning his heavily-jowled face and powerful, fiery-blue eyes on P. C. Breagh, who was thanking him in his best German for his timely assistance:

"Do not thank me so effusively. I have a habit of sometimes saving a man's life! Yours happened to be in peril; there is no need to say more!"

The clear, incisive tones had an inflection that was almost contemptuous, yet a smile, curving the heavy moustache, showed the small and well-preserved teeth it shadowed, as he added in his admirable English, fastening a button of the thin black waterproof cloak which had been disarranged in the recent struggle sufficiently to show that it covered some sort of military uniform:

"Save this,—that I happen to possess a son about your age, and should not care to lose him!"

And with this he was gone, leaving P. C. Breagh breathless with the greatness of the adventure that had befallen him. For the owner of the bulldog face with the fierce blue eyes blazing over their heavy orbital pouches, was

the unpopular Minister who had been booed by the Ultramontane and Socialist students three years before, as the Berlin express-train passed through the station of Schwärz-Brettingen—the all-powerful Chancellor, who was meant when diplomats and Press leader-writers referred to "Prussia."

What did he on foot in those packed, roaring thoroughfares, where the assassin's dagger or revolver might play its part so safely? Perhaps, like the Third Napoleon, whose peacock bubble of Empire might now have reached the point of bursting, Count Bismarck believed in his fortunate star. . . .

Ah! what was that round bright object lying on the pavement? P. C. Breagh, still dazed with the magnitude of the thing that had befallen him, stooped and picked it up.

It was a medal of silver, with the Prussian Eagle enamelled in red upon the obverse, and a name which left no doubt as to the identity of P. C. Breagh's rescuer. Upon the reverse was the inscription: "*Für Rettung aus Gefahr*" —"For Saving From Danger." With the date of the 24th June, 1842. . . .

No doubt the Chancellor prized this, the decoration earned at twenty-four for saving his orderly-groom and another private from drowning, when serving as Landwehr cavalry officer with the Stargaard Regiment of Hussars. Well, he should have it back,—but into no hands but his would P. C. Breagh surrender it,—P. C. Breagh, who had been cast out with mockery from the editorial offices of one daily and two evening newspapers, when he had offered—at a rate of astounding cheapness,—to supply their columns with material drawn from the experiences of one who had never previously enjoyed an opportunity of seeing the thing called War.

One Editor had dealt with him drastically, pitching his

card into the waste-paper basket, and saying, "No! Get out with you!" A second had whistled up a tube and called down a sub-editor, and said to him, "Look at this!" The third had preached a brief but pithy sermon on presumption and cocksureness, winding up with the intimation that if P. C. Breagh ever found himself at the seat of war and in possession of any experiences worth recording, he might submit them for consideration if he chose.

These men would never know it, but they were profoundly humiliated. At least one of them had lost a half-column, striking the note of personal adventure to the clink of shekels of fine gold. As for Mr. Knewbit . . . P. C. Breagh could almost hear him chuckling—had only to shut his eyes to see the poker, sketching out headings on the Coram Street kitchen wall:

"ADVENTURE OF YOUNG ENGLISHMAN.

WAR CORRESPONDENT IN BERLIN.

CRUSHED BY THE CROWD.

RESCUED BY BISMARCK.

THE IRON HAND SAVES A LIFE!"

Meanwhile, the medal had to be returned to the hands of its owner, who must, P. C. Breagh was firm on that!—consent to receive it from the hands of the finder, if he wanted it back again. P. C. Breagh knew the Foreign Office, in the Wilhelm Strasse—the shabbiest residence in all that street of official palaces—with its high-pitched, red-tiled Mansard roof, its shabby gray stuccoed front, (a main building with two short wings, pierced by twelve windows, and decorated with a sham-Hellenic frieze and shallow pilasters),—and its big, park-like garden stretching away behind

So, clutching the precious token, P. C. Breagh plunged back into the crowd. It was dense, but no longer solid, and, still lustily singing, with intervals of cheering, it bore him down the Linden as far as the Brandenburg Gate.

There it split into three vociferating rivers of humanity. One of which streamed north-westwards, towards the offices of the Great General Staff, where Moltke, the ancient war-wizard, was busy over his maps! Another, desirous of refreshment, surged onwards in the direction of the Thiergarten. The third flowed down the street of palaces, and with it went P. C. Breagh.

XXVIII.

The Foreign Office knocker was a colossal funereal wreath of sooty bronze laurel, that wakened hollow startling echoes in the tomb-like void of a grim stone vestibule.

The vestibule lay at the end of a glass-roofed passage. On the right was a window, behind the window gleamed an eye, belonging to the Chancery janitor who had manipulated the door-levers. The door banged behind P. C. Breagh, and his hope climbed a central flight of stairs, gray-white marble, with bronze balusters badly in need of cleaning. The staircase was covered with worn Turkey carpet, was lighted from above by a green and gold cupola, and guarded by two conventional figures of sphinxes, carved in shiny blackish stone.

All these details the eye of P. C. Breagh gleaned over the arm of the Chancellor's door-porter, a seven-foot East Prussian, who wore plain black official livery and carried no gold-headed staff, yet would have snubbed the Rector of the University of Schwärz-Brettingen had he presented himself in this unceremonious way.

"What does he want? The young man must know

that His Excellency the Royal Chancellor of the North German Confederation is engaged upon State business—not to be approached by strangers having no appointments or credentials previously obtained. An introduction to His Excellency is indispensable. Where has the young man lived that he does not know that ?"

To which the young man thus addressed could only reiterate that he deeply regretted the absence of a letter of introduction, and that his credentials could only be displayed to His Excellency himself.

"It is likely !" The porter's forehead corrugated with suspicion: "Thus is he approached by lunatics and dangerous persons, armed with crazy petitions or lethal weap——"

"Bosh !"

The English word made the porter leap in his square-toed, steel-buckled half-shoes. Recklessly P. C. Breagh went on:

"I'm neither a lunatic or an assassin. . . . It's just a case of *Rettung aus Gefahr*. Two lives saved in the year 1842, and another less than an hour ago. . . . Send that message to His Excellency, and he'll see me, I believe !" . . .

"He believes !" . . . snorted the porter indignantly.

A little, stooping, shabbily-dressed old man in a chocolate coloured frock-coat with gilt buttons came shuffling across the vestibule carrying a handful of papers, telegrams they appeared to be. He had paused to listen to the latter part of the colloquy, holding his head on one side, as though the better to focus his sharp gray glance on the dusty, obtrusive young Englishman crowned with a sunburnt Oxford straw hat, attired in a well-worn brown Norfolk jacket, knickerbockers and heather-mixture woollen stockings, and shod with stout, black, leather-laced, hobnailed boots.

"He believes!" exclaimed the porter, as though referring to the chocolate-coated old gentleman. "Will not the highly well-born Herr Legation-Councillor order that I summon Grams and Engelberg, and have this presumptuous person thrown into the street?"

"Softly, softly, my good Niederstedt!" advised the little chocolate-coated old gentleman. He added, shuffling forward in his immense black cloth boots over the slippery marble pavement of the vestibule: "It has occurred to me that an utterance of this young man's referred to an article that has been lost by His Excellency." He added, fixing his sharp, gray, jackdaw's eyes on the face of the young man: "Not valuable, but worth recovering—purely as a memento of the past! . . ."

Said Carolan bluntly:

"I did refer to such an article. In fact, I have it on me!"

A finger and thumb, stained with snuff, dipped into the Councillor's waistcoat pocket. He said, secretly conveying an order to the watchful porter with a twirl of one jackdaw-eye:

"For a couple of thalers," he displayed the coin, "a box of smokable cigars may be purchased in Berlin." He added, having cast for a bite, and missing the rise: "Four thalers secures a really excellent article!"

"Certainly," agreed P. C. Breagh.

"But for ten thalers," continued the old gentleman with forced enthusiasm, coaxingly beckoning P. C. Breagh to approach nearer, "one may smoke the choicest Havana brands. Give me the medal, fortunate young man, and take the money. Such a sum is not often picked up in the street!"

Said the young man, thus adjured, thrusting out his square chin obstinately:

"If His Excellency consents to receive me, I will per-

sonally return the medal to him. Be good enough to let him know as much."

"Unhappy young man! you realise not the greatness of your own presumption!" expostulated the old gentleman, lifting up his warty eyelids and puffing out his whiskered cheeks over his old-fashioned black satin stock. "Is the Chancellor of the Realm to be—and at a national crisis such as this?—at the beck and call of every English traveller?" He added with warmth: "For I know you to be of that nation, young man, though you speak German with some approach to facility. Hence! Trouble here no more, but give me that medal before you take your departure. Otherwise you will be forcibly relieved of it by the hands of those who are accustomed to deal with bumptious and obstinately-authority-defying persons of your description. . . ."

He added, as the arms of P. C. Breagh were pinioned in an iron grip that clamped the elbows together behind the shoulder-blades, drew his arms down, and pinioned his wrists: "He, he, he! That was a capital stratagem of yours, my excellent Niederstedt! Really very smartly done!"

The grim, sable-clad porter, in whose huge hands P. C. Breagh vainly struggled, relaxed into a smile at the compliment. He said, as from different points two stalwart liveried attendants appeared, hastening to lend assistance:

"One has not served in the Prussian Guards for nothing. Once a soldier, always a soldier! Will the highly well-born Herr Legation-Councillor order Grams and Engelberg to hold this English pig-dog while I take His Excellency's medal out of the fellow's clothes?"

Snarled P. C. Breagh, livid with rage and glaring at the hostile faces like a young male tiger-cat:

"Add robbery to violence if you think well!—you are four to one—and in your own country. But as an English

journalist I protest against the outrage. . . . And the British Ambassador shall take the matter up !"

There was an instant's pause of indecision, during which P. C. Breagh heard the opening of a door on the landing above. Then, with the rustle of silk, and the soft fall of footsteps traversing heavy carpets, a resonant voice called down the stair that led up between the basalt Sphinxes:

" Meanwhile, you will allow me to apologise for the too-excessive zeal of my servants. Do me the favour to come up here !"

The grip of the giant porter became flaccid as an infant's. The voice spoke again from the summit of the stair:

" Herr Legation-Councillor, will you kindly see Madame to her carriage ? *Au revoir, Madame, et bon voyage !*"

A liquid voice responded:

" *Au revoir, Monseigneur !* At Paris—who knows !—before the Noël !"

She pulled down her veil, curtsied with demure elegance, and came softly rustling down in pale-hued, trailing silks and laces, one snow-white hand blazing with splendid emeralds, lightly passing over the bronze baluster-rail, the other holding the ivory and jewelled stick of a dainty parasol.

" Madame !"

As by an afterthought he had called her. Midway in her descent the lady turned to look up at him. He said, bending his powerful eyes upon the face of sensuous loveliness:

" Pardon ! but I believe—you are a native of France ?"

The hint stung. She returned, with the stain of an angry blush darkening the roses purchased from Rimmel; and a hard line showing from the angle of each delicate nostril to the corner of the deep-cut, scarlet lips:

" Monseigneur is correct . . . I am a Frenchwoman. . . . But the heart is free to choose its own country. . . . And—mine has learned to beat for the Fatherland ! . . ."

So exquisite was the cadence with which the words were uttered, that P. C. Breagh heaved an involuntary sigh. The Legation-Councillor took snuff—it may have been his way of showing emotion. The huge porter sighed like a locomotive blowing off steam. His colleagues, who, like himself, stood waiting in rigid military attitudes, suffered no sympathy to appear in their wooden faces, yet may have felt the more. But the heavy mask of their master was divested of all expression.

"Even," said he, in his clear, resonant voice, "to the point of outdoing Agamemnon, King of Argos. For he—but doubtless you are familiar with the classic story!—merely sacrificed Iphigeneia on the altar of the virginal Artemis. . . ." He added with a tone of intolerable irony: "It would have required fewer scruples and more toughness than Agamemnon possessed to have offered up an only daughter to Venus Libertina. . . . Only a woman of fashion would be capable of such infamy. . . . Pardon! but you have dropped your parasol!"

She had shuddered and winced as though his words had been vitriol,—dropped from above—corroding her delicate flesh. . . . The costly toy had fallen from her hand as the shudder had passed over her, and rolled down the stair, as she continued her descent. P. C. Breagh picked it up and handed it to her, as she set foot upon the lowest step of the staircase. She looked at him, and bent her head. And the beauty that had been hers a moment back, was so strangely, bleakly altered, he could scarcely repress an exclamation of dismay.

Thus Circe might have stared, thought P. C. Breagh, when her feeding hogs leapt up as men frantic for vengeance. Thus Duessa, when the spotted image of her own vileness was reflected in the glassy shield of Truth.

The change in the boy's face stabbed Madame to consciousness. She caught at her mauve tulle veil, forgetful

that it was already lowered, and tore it horizontally, so that her full white rounded chin emerged with fantastic effect, like the moon through a bank of storm-wrack. And then, with her head held high, she swept through the vestibule in a *frou-frou* of silks and a gale of perfume, and down the passage ending in the hall-door with the funereal knocker. The Legation-Councillor trotted after her. One of the servants followed him, and P. C. Breagh, mounting the staircase between the Sphinxes, reached the landing and the summit of his ambitions in a breath.

"Time is scarce!" said the man who was meant when Prime Ministers and political leader-writers referred to Prussia. "I have no more than five minutes to spare, but you shall have them. Come this way! So you are an English journalist! What paper do you represent, here in Berlin? Sit down and tell me in as few words as possible!"

They were in a small but lofty room on the first-floor, hung with green flock paper. It had a fireplace as well as a stove, and it was a study, yet it contained no bookcases, only a couple of shelved stands laden with pamphlets and papers of the official kind. The two high windows—open and unblinded, though the green-shaded reading-lamp upon the big carved mahogany writing-table was alight—looked across the extensive gardens reaching to the Königgrätzer-Strasse. Beyond lay the Thiergarten, all black with masses of people under the sultry red-gold sunset of middle July.

Perhaps you can see—like Scaramouch and the Sultan in the Eastern story—P. C. Breagh, hot and dusty, flushed and rumpled, seated opposite the most formidable personage of the day. He who dictated to Kings and carried his Foreign Office trailing after him whenever he chose to go campaigning, stood upon the skin of a white lioness that served as hearthrug, and bit off the end of a huge

cigar. He looked bulkier than ever, and the powerful modelling of his scant-haired temples, the splendid dome of the skull that housed the keenest intellect in Europe, the masterful regard of the great eyes, the sarcastic humour of the mouth shaded by the heavy moustache—traits and features reproduced so constantly in the illustrated newspapers of the period,—conveyed to Carolan the impression that a portrait moved and spoke.

He was attired, as usually represented, in a dark blue, braided military undress-frock, and trousers tightly strapped over boots with cavalry spurs. An Order hung at his collar. As he threw back his head in the act of lighting his cigar, P. C. Breagh recognised the Cross of a Commander of the Red Eagle. While on the left breast of the blue frock-coat was a small three-cornered rent in the cloth from which the lost medal had been somehow wrenched away. . . .

The sight of that tear in the dark blue faced-cloth sent the blood racing to P. C. Breagh's forehead. He knew himself for a presumptuous young man. He plunged his hand into the pocket of the brown Norfolk jacket, and brought out the red-and-white enamelled decoration, and said, awkwardly laying it upon the edge of the big writing-table, in the yellow radius thrown by the lighted lamp:

"I found this after Your Excellency had gone!"

"Hand it here!" said the heavy blue eyes imperiously. P. C. Breagh got up and obeyed. The Chancellor's long arm shot out, and the muscular white fingers whipped the medal from the palm that offered it. Its owner assured himself by a brief scrutiny that the token had sustained no injury, nodded, and re-pinned it on the breast of his frogged military frock-coat. When this was accomplished, —the small solution in the continuity of the cloth being covered by the decoration,—he said, taking the cigar from

his mouth, and knocking off the long crisp ash upon the edge of the white earthenware stove:

"I should have been sorry to have lost that. But, while thanking you for having restored it, let me say that had my servants taken it from you by *force majeure* they would not have been robbing you,—though in law they might have been held guilty of a personal assault. Now as to your business. You have had one of your five minutes! You have just now said you are an English journalist. Does your business concern the War?"

P. C. Breagh stammered—for the heavy eyes that rested on him seemed to oppress him physically:

"To be frank with Your Excellency, I represent no newspaper. I have some slight experience as a journalist, that is all,—War Correspondence seems to me the highest branch of journalism,—and I want, naturally, to fit myself to practise it. Therefore, as no newspaper would employ me, I accepted a private commission given, out of good-nature, by a friend, who has helped me before. And—my first day in Berlin—I fell in with Your Excellency. I won't deny it seemed a hopeful augury!"

"For the future! . . . I understand!" said the Chancellor, sending out a long cloud of cigar-smoke. "And in what way do you suggest that I should help you?"

He put the question so bluntly that P. C. Breagh in the effort to answer, floundered and boggled. He had suddenly realised his own insect-like insignificance in the eyes that were so intolerably heavy in their regard. His own eyes sank to the neat, small, polished boots of the big man who stood smoking upon the white lioness-skin. To the wearer of those boots he was merely a beetle who could be crushed by them. The slight ironical smile that altered the curve of the moustache said as much. But the Minister's tone was suave as he went on:

"I think I have grasped the mainspring of your reasoning. To begin with, you desire to accompany one of our armies on the campaign ?"

"Yes—sir ! Your Excellency, I should say !"

A lambent light of humour danced in the blue eyes that were bent on him. The faint ironic smile broadened into a laugh. The Chancellor took his cigar from his mouth, knocked off the ash, and said quite pleasantly:

"And deducting from this premise, I conjecture that—because I have been privileged to save you from being trampled to death under the feet of the mob upon the Linden, you naturally take it for granted that I would further your ambitions. Gratitude, one of your English authors has admirably defined as a lively sense of favours to come. . . ."

"I—I——"

P. C. Breagh, who had been for some time shrinking in his own estimation, suddenly saw himself in a newer, meaner light. His torturer went on in mellifluous English:

"I do not know that any classical German author has defined gratitude quite so cleverly. But we in Pommerania have a folk-story which may be new to you." He drew sharply at his cigar, then laid it glowing on the edge of the stove:

"You speak German quite passably, so I will tell it in our Pommeranian dialect. If this is not done, the dialogue lacks salt. Thus it goes: Wedig Knips, a peasant of Dalow, whose horses wanted watering, went one winter's day to break the ice that covered the drinking-hole. . . . 'Bless us ! what have we here ?' says he, when he finds a *kerl* called Peders, frozen in the ice, with his head down and his heels up. To make a long story short, he chops out Peders, takes him home, and sets him up to thaw before the fire. . . . 'Now, neighbour,' says he, 'go about

your business !'—' How can I when my jerkin is wet and my breeches are full of muddy water ?' — Says Wedig: ' Poor devil ! I will give you my Sunday trows !'—' And a jerkin too, for you saved my life, you must remember !' . . . Wedig scratches his head, but hands over a jerkin with the rest. ' Come, now be off !' says he. ' " Off," with my under-pants and shirt all sopping ! Do you want to kill me—now that you have saved my life ?'—So Wedig pulls a wry face, but hands over the underclothes. . . . ' Put these on and be off, we are busy people in this house !' ' What,' says Peders, ' without paying me the value of the good duds spoiled in your stinking horsepond ?'—' Must I pay ?' . . . ' Certainly, you have saved my life ! Nobody asked you !—I had thrown myself in because I was tired of living. Now it is your bounden duty to make things tolerable for me !'—' How make things tolerable ?'—' To begin with, I want a cottage to live in, and a plot of kail-ground to it, and a wee pickle furniture.'—' But I have only this cottage, and the bits of sticks you see !'—' Well, give me them ! Didn't you save my life ?' . . . Wedig gets confused, sees no way out of it. ' The devil !' says he, ' this is a nice affair ! However, take them, man !'—' I will take them,' says Peders, ' but you must give me the cart and plough, the cow and the two horses !'—' *Himmel-kreuzbombenelement !* Have I got to give you all that because I saved your life ?'—' Ay, undoubtedly !—and you must let me have your wife into the bargain. It's your bounden duty——' ' I know ! because I saved your life ! Shan't make such a mistake next time, you may be sure of that !'—' No, but you did, so to grumble is no use.'—' Thunder ! my old girl will make a terrible squawking.'—' Not when you have explained how you saved my life !' . . . Wedig scratches his head, rubs his chin, gets a bright idea. . . . ' Help me to explain to the wife, do you agree ?' —' Ay, of course ! What is it you want me to say to her ?'

—'Oh! say nothing. Only let me show her exactly how I got you out of the water-hole.'—'Willingly!'—'But to do that I must put you back just a minute!'—'Put me back?'—'Only for a minute.' 'Promise when I cry "*Genug!*" you'll take me out directly!'—'All right! Come along!' So Wedig takes Peders by the legs and sticks him back where he found him, driving his head well down into the mud at the bottom of the pond. . . . So—he never cried '*Genug!*' and Wedig left him there. . . ."

The hard blue eyes that had been all alight with laughter, the heavily-moulded face that had unexpectedly proved itself capable of comic changes, the voice that, as the droll dialogue proceeded, had conveyed with slight, admirably-restrained mimicry the complacent assurance of the knave and the dull bewilderment of the victim, changed, became the Minister's again. He said, in his smoothest tones:

"I cannot put you back into the crush of the crowd, because by an appeal to its loyal feelings and domestic instincts I was so fortunate as to disperse it. What I might do, of course, is to deliver you to the tender mercies of my servants, to whom,—when you brought back the medal,—you blustered about delivering it to me personally. This not-exactly-very-clever ruse would have failed—had I not happened to step upon the scene. Your English policy is often more fortunate than masterly. . . . Fortune certainly has favoured you to-day. Not in the fulfilment of your ambition to accompany a Prussian Army to the field of action—that is a wish impossible to gratify. For we put up a general defence against the presence of any save the most highly-accredited Correspondents, and the War Minister will only grant *Legitimations* to two or three. But in obtaining for an obscure paragraphist à special interview with the Prussian Minister for Foreign Affairs on the eve of a world-crisis, Fortune has certainly favoured

you. Go back now to your hotel and write your article; then telegraph to Fleet Street and make your own terms!"

"I'll be shot if I do!" choked out P. C. Breagh, flaming scarlet to his hair-roots. "And I thank Your Excellency for a lesson, and I beg to take my leave!"

"Why does he go? Why does he talk about a lesson?" asked the broad, cynical gaze that rested on him.

As though he had spoken aloud, P. C. Breagh answered:

"Because I set my personal advantage above common gratitude and honour. Your Excellency lost the medal in pulling me out of the scrimmage at the risk of your own life, and when I found the thing—I used it,—exactly as you say! True, you'd snubbed me when I'd tried to thank you! yet I did believe your having saved me might help me in some way. . . . But it would be better to cadge in the dustbins for a living, than make money out of information gained by trickery. And I apologise sincerely for having been such a cad!"

"'Cad' is the slang for vulgarian, is it not?" He added: "Yes, they inculcate a code of honour at the English public schools?"

The voice grated. P. C. Breagh hated its owner. But he answered, looking squarely in the bulldog face that bent on him:

"They do, and I am sorry to have broken at least one of its articles. May I wish Your Excellency good afternoon!"

The speaker bowed, not clumsily, and turned to quit the room, when a ferocious growl behind him, and the scraping of heavy claws on slippery parquet pulled round his head. Savage, red-rimmed eyes challenged, and the bared gleaming fangs of a huge boarhound couched at length under a wrought-iron sofa at the west end of the longish room, menaced the stranger's throat:

"Down, Tyras!" ordered the Minister harshly, and with a deep groan the heavy brute dropped its nose between its

forepaws, and lay still, shaken by occasional rumbling growls.

"You see," said the Minister, laughing, "that I can afford to dispense with the services of detectives when this good servant is at hand. Come, sit down another moment. . . . I am really willing to help you. . . . You have not come so badly as you imagine out of the affair!"

"But I have said I will not write the article, and I am intruding on Your Excellency's privacy." The soul of P. C. Breagh yearned for the freedom of the streets. To be shut up in the study of the greatest of living Ministers,—set beak-to-beak with the man who was occupying the attention of Europe;—the master-mind in statecraft, who used blunt truth as a weapon to beat down diplomatic falsehood, and comported himself amidst the striving parties of his national Parliament as a giant surrounded by dwarfs;—had seemed, previously, a thing to boast of—a dazzling feather in the cap of achievement. Now it was no triumph, but a torture. He writhed under those keen, amused, analytical glances, knowing himself worthy to be so despised.

"I have twenty minutes in which to refresh and rest, not having eaten or sat down since ten o'clock this morning. You have had ten—I will give you another five. Sit down again there!"

Tyras emitted another savage growl as though in support of his owner's authority, and P. C. Breagh, loathing his host even more intensely than he hated P. C. Breagh, obeyed the imperious hand that pointed to the chair he had vacated, and sat down, white-gilled now, and sick with longing to be out of this presence into which he had thrust himself—beyond the reach of the icy, contemptuous tones and the arrogant, domineering eyes.

The Chancellor had turned away to pull at one of the red woollen bell-ropes that hung on either side of the fire-

place, shabby things, threadbare with use, like the Persian carpet that was trodden out in paths by the spurred feet of the man who stood for Prussia; worn like the leather cushions of the great wrought-iron sofa, under which the great man's faithful attendant couched, with one eye on the familiar face, and the other on the strange one that might mask an enemy.

Above the sofa, beneath a trophy of fencing-swords and masks, reigning over a rack supporting a number of red and white military undress-caps in all stages of wear, and another containing a collection of pipe-sticks and unmounted pipe-heads, hung the half-length oil-portrait of a beautiful girl in ball-dress. Below was a large-framed photograph of a noble-looking woman, with a mass of black braided hair framing a long, serious face, with grave dark eyes, thick straight nose, and full-curved, humorous lips recalling published engravings of the English author of 'Adam Bede.' Probably it was the Countess—that same Fräulein Johanna Puttkammer who had been hugged under the gaze of her assembled family. She looked strong, serene and courageous, fit—thought P. C. Breagh—to be the wife of a man destined by Fate and framed by nature to become a leader of men. Also, she looked like a woman who could love with old-world, elemental, forceful passion. She had bestowed such love upon this man—who had begun life as a roaring, hard-drinking young Pommeranian squire, well worthy of the sobriquet of 'Mad Bismarck,' bestowed upon him by his native county.

She had sifted the gold out of the sand. . . . She had never openly displayed her influence. . . . All the same it had been there, guiding, sustaining, controlling. . . . He had written to her, years after, when he had begun in earnest to be a power in politics. . . . '*You see what you have made of me! What should I have done without you?*'

Arrogant, harsh, domineering, merciless, as his enemies

had reason to term him, there must be something noble in the man who had written like that. He was said to be a kind, if not over-indulgent father to his two big sons, even then serving as private soldiers in a well-known regiment of Dragoon Guards, and to be worshipped by his daughter, a feminine copy of himself, if that oil-portrait were anything like. . . .

"Have you taken any food to-day? . . ."

The interrogation brought P. C. Breagh's head round. A servant must have appeared, and gone, and come again in answer to the bell-summons. For on a clear corner of an *étagère* otherwise piled with official papers and pamphlets, stood a tray, bearing glasses and a vast crystal jug of creaming golden-hued nectar with miniature icebergs floating on the surface; and several dishes of rolls, split, profusely buttered, and lined with something savoury, the sight and scent of which awoke tender yearnings within. . . .

"No!—I thought not. Drink this and eat some of these sandwiches. I myself have fasted longer than is agreeable!"

And a huge goblet of the ice-cold creaming nectar was handed to P. C. Breagh, who immediately realised that his tongue and palate were dry as the sun-baked asphalt of the Linden.

"*Prosit!*" said his host, and drained his glass, adding, as the guest duly responded according to the classic formula and drank: "You are University-bred, I see! What Alma Mater had the preference? Schwärz-Brettingen! . . . Ah, they thought very badly of me there about the time of the Luxembourg Garrison Question. Nearly all the little foxes barked at me as I passed through. However, we are now reconciled, and more than a thousand of the students have applied to serve as volunteers in this war,—there's an item of interest for your paper!—though you have Quixotically determined, you say, not to make use of any

information that I may be enabled to offer you. All Quixotism is weakness, in my estimation; a man, according to my code, should pursue his advantage where he finds it, irrespective of ethical laws or religious prejudice. Now eat some of these stuffed rolls. Here are caviar, smoked goose-breast, Westphalian ham and liver-sausage. You see I set you an example !—and a would-be campaigner should be able to sleep soundly under any and all conditions; and eat whenever anything eatable is obtainable, with unflinching appetite !"

The savoury rolls were vanishing under the speaker's repeated attacks, and the golden tide in the great crystal decanter was sinking visibly. He said, lifting and holding it so that between the light of the green-shaded table-lamp and the red glow of sunset pouring through the unblinded western windows, the liquid in it shone ruby and emerald. . . .

" Come, let me fill your glass again, and then I shall send you about your business. Absolved, you understand, from that ridiculous vow of yours—and with a magic talisman to enable you to use your eyes."

The steady hand set down the now emptied jug, and took from the red marble mantelshelf a small and perfectly-finished pair of field-glasses, covered in black Russia leather and mounted in ivory. An inlaid silver shield bore a monogram, ' O. v. B.-S.,' and a date.

" You can shoot with a pistol ?—Good !—then I should advise you to buy one, if possible. A revolver of the American Colt's invention—six-barrelled—a feature which increases weight in proportion as it adds to effectiveness—would be useful. Indeed, I carry one myself ! One day they will turn out such things with one barrel—but we must wait for that, I am afraid. Here is the case belonging to the glasses, with a strap to sling it round your shoulders —and one thing more I will give you—though I am less certain about its ultimate usefulness !"

The writing-table stood in the middle of the room. He moved to it with one of his long, heavy strides, sat down —dipped quill in ink—and penned a few lines rapidly, glancing at the sunburnt, freckled face as though to refresh his memory—holding up an imperious hand for silence when the recipient of the field-glasses seemed about to protest against the value of the gift.

"Your nationality? — 'British.' Name, 'Patrick Carolan Breagh—pronounced "Brack."' Your height?— Be very accurate. One half-inch too much or too little might bring you into trouble of a serious kind. 'Five feet ten' . . . you promise to be taller. Your age . . . twenty-three last January. . . . Shoulders broad, good muscular development. Your hair . . . reddish, is it not? . . . You have gray eyes with what the French would call *taches* of yellow in them. Complexion fresh, considerably freckled. Nose short and straight, ears small, teeth white and regular. Chin square and with a cleft—weaklings have not such chins! . . ."

He added a brief sentence to the hastily-scrawled description, signed and blotted it, rose and came to P. C. Breagh and thrust it in his hand.

"Do not thank me! It is my passing whim to help you —regard it in that light. As to this pass, safe-conduct or whatever one may call it—it may forward you or hinder you. . . *Potztausend!* I am a mere officer of Cuirassiers of the Landwehr—General by courtesy—not Generalissimo! . . . You, Bucher! . . . What is there wanted now? . . ."

For a scratch on the door-panel had been succeeded by the flurried entrance of the little Councillor of Legation, breathing hard, and red in the face. He gabbled in Spanish:

"Pardon, Your Excellency, that I enter without knocking. But His Highness the Crown Prince is coming upstairs! . . ."

And almost in the same instant, as Tyras uttered a deep '*wuff*' of friendly greeting, the open doorway was filled by the stateliest and most martial figure in Europe, and a pleasant, manly voice said:

"Not finding you in your official quarters below-stairs, I ventured, my dear Count Bismarck, to follow you to your private study. It is a question of whether Le Sourd delivered the war-gauntlet from Paris, or—— Pardon! I had no idea that you were not alone!"

The tall, broad-chested, golden-bearded Viking in the undress uniform of the First Regiment of Guards, touched his cap in acknowledgment of P. C. Breagh's respectful salutation. Then, as in obedience to a glance from the Minister, the lean claws of the little Councillor closed upon P. C. Breagh's arm, and he was plucked from the room; the Prince asked, glancing after the queer couple:

"May one ask who your young friend is?" and got answer:

"It is only an English schoolboy, Your Royal Highness,—who thirsts to try his hand at War-correspondence—having had a few articles printed in some London rag. And this being so, he applies to me, who am the least leisured person in His Majesty's dominions—for a moment of my spare time! . . ."

"It is annoying, my dear Count," answered the mellow-voiced Viking, "but cannot your people keep such troublesome persons outside?"

The Minister returned, laughing:

"He caught me on my doorstep,—as the polecat waylaid the badger!—and as he brought back a decoration I had lost, and which he, luckily for himself, had found!—I could not refuse him a minute's interview. But with regard to Your Royal Highness's question of an instant since—Le Sourd, the French Chargé d'Affaires, placed the

Emperor's declaration of war in my hands about an hour after the opening of Council in the Palace to-day."

Said the Prince:

"Unhappy man! driven to risk the loss of an Empire that he may continue to rule a nation of enemies. One can hardly doubt the issue—yet at what cost of lives shall we not purchase victory!"

Bismarck said in harsh, metallic tones, bending his brows upon the Prince who all the world knew loved peace, and loathed the thought of the red months of strife that were approaching:

"Your Royal Highness is aware that I look upon this war as necessary, and that I should not have returned to Varzin without giving in my resignation to His Majesty had the issue been other than what it is. . . . As for this weak-backed Napoleon, this Pierrot stuffed with bran,—who is kept in an upright attitude only by the slaps I deal him on one cheek and the buffets the Monarchists and the Revolutionists lend him on the other!—it will be better for him to meet his end by a bullet or a sword-thrust on the banks of the Rhine, than to be blown in pieces by some bomb in the streets of Paris, or to die of apoplexy in the bedroom of some nymph of the theatre-*coulisses!*"

He drew himself to his full height, and folding his powerful arms upon his breast, said, looking full at the Prince, who had declined a seat and who was standing near the window, his hair and beard glowing golden-red in the full rays of the setting sun:

"Your Royal Highness speaks of the effusion of blood. I am of those who have drawn the sword in the service of their King and country. I do not regard war from the point of view of the man who stops at home. More than this! . . . His Majesty is not the only father who has a son serving in our Army. . . . I have two. Herbert and Bill. . . ."

A pale purplish tint suffused his heavy face and crept to the summit of his rugged forehead. His fierce blue eyes dimmed. He said, in slightly muffled tones:

"I am not given to pompous phrases. Yet if German unity can only be brought about by a great national war waged against our near-hand enemy—our old, cunning, sleepless foe—I hail that war, even though it leave me without posterity! If the gulf that divides the Northern and Southern sections of the Fatherland can be better bridged by my boys' dead bodies . . . I would give them as freely as I would give my own!"

A spasm twisted his under-jaw. He said, laughing in his stern way:

"Three long-legged Bismarcks should equal one eighteen-foot-seven plank. And I speak not only for myself. My wife would echo me."

Said the Prince in his cordial way:

"My mother has a great admiration for Her Excellency. My wife, too, speaks of her as a woman of antique nobility of mind." He continued, with a smile that curved the bold, frank mouth under the glittering moustache into lines of exceeding pleasantness: "And her personal solicitude for Your Excellency pleases my father much!"

The heavy face that opposed him lost its dogged, set expression. The Minister broke into a hearty laugh.

"So! I have been waiting to hear somewhat of that voluble telegram of hers to Abeken: '*Pray ask the King not to bother Count Bismarck about State matters just now, when he is taking Carlsbad waters for the gout!*'"

"Ha, ha!" The Prince joined gaily in the laughter. "The Councillor was working with the King and myself, when he received that wire. It came with a sheaf of others—he read it aloud without a change of expression. . . . Then you should have seen his face . . . a study for a comedian. . . ."

The Minister said, still smiling:

"My wife pours many confidences of the domestic sort into Abeken's bosom. She said to him during the Constitutional Conflict of '66 . . . 'Bismarck cares really nothing at all about these stupid political matters. A cabbage well grown, or a fir-tree well planted, mean more to him than the Indemnity Bill.' Yet when the Bill passed she was all-triumphant. And to-day she remarked to me: 'War is horrible to me on principle. But it would be equally horrible to me if you said to me to-morrow: "*All is over !—we do not fight ! . . .*"'" I made her angry by telling her that one might parody in application to the mental attitude of her sex the lines of the English Poet Laureate, and say:

"Her reason rooted in unreason stood."

"When our German women become too highly-educated," said the fair-haired giant, "Love will take wing for a land where the culture of the feminine intellect is still unpopular. We males hold our supremacy on the very insecure tenure of a carefully-inculcated belief that being men, we must be wise !"

Said the Minister:

"There is a Pommeranian proverb bearing on that question. '*In the house where a strip of green hide hangs handy, the wife will never know better than her old man !*'"

"Unless she happened to be the stronger of the two, bodily as well as mentally, dear Count," the Prince rejoined; "in which case the husband would be well advised to accept the inferior place. For against brute-strength and brains combined, there is no remedy but patience."

Bismarck retorted:

"Possibly—but what if the muscular brute with the brains possesses a share of patience also ? There is nothing like knowing how to wait—I assure Your Royal Highness !"

The Prince looked at the great figure topped by the stolid

bulldog face, and recalled something that the English Princess, his wife, had said to him that day:

"This fearful struggle will set the coping-stone upon that man's colossal labours and ambitions!"

But he was all grave, gracious cordiality as they passed from the lighter vein of talk to serious questions, though as he took leave of the Minister at the hall-door and stepped into his waiting carriage, he said to himself mournfully:

"Alix was right. He has what he has waited and schemed for. To light this international conflagration he would have ventured down to fetch a burning brand from the nethermost Hell. And what oceans of blood will be poured out before the fire may be extinguished—none knows but God alone!"

XXIX.

Von Moltke, the ancient war-wizard, went home from the Council-Extraordinary to his private quarters at the offices of the Great General Staff. He despatched the three-word telegram, and the vast machine began to work. . . .

All had been ready for two years. Nothing was left to finish at the last moment. Not a speck of rust marred shaft or spindle or bearing, not a drop of oil was clogged in any slot.

Days back, the Heads of Departments had been recalled by a brief telegram from the Chief who knew how to be taciturn in seven languages. Now, while in Berlin, as in every other city and town of Prussia Proper, and her Eleven Provinces, palaces, mansions, restaurants and *cafés*, beer-gardens and schnaps-cellars, blazed with gas and resounded with the clinking of glasses, and people sat late into the grilling July night, discussing and rediscussing

that special supplement of the *North German Gazette*,—which was being distributed gratuitously by hundreds of thousands,—predicting the next move of the Man of Iron, and the latest *ruse* of the Man of Paris,—consuming tons of sausage, caviar, pickled salmon, herrings in salad, and potted tunny, with strawberries and other fruits and sweet dishes, all washed down by floods of cooling beer, or iced Moselle and champagne—the numberless huge barracks and other military establishments displayed another kind of activity.

Here no outbursts of patriotic song and festivity checked the rapid, organised, methodical scurry of warlike preparation. Soldiers ran about like busy ants, purposeful and unblundering. Long trains of Army Service carts and waggons streamed in at divers lofty gates, to emerge at others after the briefest interval, heavily laden with Army Stores, Army baggage, War-material of all kinds. Night and day, huge Government factories and foundries dithered and roared, filling up newly-made vacuums in those huge magazines and storehouses which must always be kept full. In the gloomy dominions of the Iron King, Herr Krupp, that stout-loined Teuton who begat great guns instead of tall sons, and had them godfathered by Prussian Royalty—what forests of tall chimneys belched forth smoke, canopying begrimed and prosperous Westphalian towns, populated by innumerable swarthy toilers in the gigantic iron and steel foundries ! At Essen, where mountains of coal kiss the sooty skies, and heavy locomotives ceaselessly grind over networks of shining steel rails, dragging strings of trucks, containing yet more fuel for the ever-hungry furnaces,—within an impregnable rampart of solid masonry, he dwelt in a Babylonian palace. The panting of innumerable steam-power engines, the banging, moaning, crashing, groaning, and grinding of forges, lathes, and planing-machines; cutting, shaping, boring, and polishing machines; with the beating of sixty-two steam-hammers, of all weights

up to that of fifty tons, which cost £100,000 to manufacture, sounded like a cannon whenever it was used, and was kept working without pause, so as not to lose a fraction of the interest of the capital sunk in it—made his concert by day, and by night served for his serenade and lullaby. He made laws for the control of his grimy subjects, this Briareus of ten thousand hands—and enforced them by the aid of his own police and magistrates. With orders in course of execution for Turkey, China, Egypt, Russia, and Spain, he was yet able to deliver eighty cannon *per* week to the different artillery depots of his Fatherland. His steel, tempered by his secret process, the new ore being brought him from his Spanish mines by his own fleet of transports, surpassed even Bessemer's. Yet he was not a conceited or purse-proud man. By the chief entrance of the biggest of all his factories stood the little soot-blackened forge where forty years before young Krupp had laboured with his father and a couple of workmen. Small wonder the powerful Iron King had honour from his over-lord.

Conceive next the well-ordered bustle at the headquarters of the different Army Corps, when the withered finger of the Warlock pressed upon the button, and the spark of electricity leaped along a thousand wires, carrying with it the vitalising word. . . . Moltke's methods were then fire-new, and made the world sit up.

You might have seen the Reserve men of the Twelve Provinces—whose summons for assembly lay ready in the Landwehr office of every city, town, village, or hamlet—streaming in at the district depots, bringing each Line regiment up to war-strength (nearly double its numbers in time of peace). Mobilisation was no foreign word to them, for once a year, after Schmidt the field-labourer had done getting in the harvest, and when Schultz, the bank-clerk,

and Kunz, the chemist's assistant, had got their annual autumn holiday, Schmidt, Schultz, and Kunz were accustomed to perform a series of carefully-rehearsed physical exercises ending in manœuvres, and a safe if inglorious return to the domestic hearth.

Schmidt, Schultz, and Kunz were only remarkable by their unlikeness to each other—Schmidt being the brown, uncouth, and unshaven husband of a stout wife and numerous tow-headed babes. Schultz was more recently married to a young lady remotely connected on the maternal side with a family possessing the right to inscribe the aristocratic prefix "von" before its surname. The couple lived frugally on Herr Schultz's salary of thirty pounds a year, somewhere upon the outskirts of the select quarter of the country town (some four miles distant from Schmidt's native village)—while Kunz, the graduate of a University, and author of a text-book of Analytical Chemistry, sold impartially to both, squills, rhubarb-tincture, and porous plasters over the counter of his employer's shop.

Served by the Burgomaster's clerk, or a wooden-faced orderly-corporal, with the compelling bit of paper, Schmidt, Schultz, and Kunz, having taken farewell embraces of their nearest and dearest, would sling over their shoulders canvas wallets containing a lump of sausage, a shirt or so, a huge chunk of bread, white or black, with a bottle containing wine or schnaps, and stowing next their skins leather purses containing a few coins, and a parchment volume resembling the English soldier's "small book," would hasten by rail or road in the direction of their regimental rendezvous, towards which bourne the Reserve contingent of other towns, villages, and hamlets would also betake themselves, until the roads were blackened with their tramping bodies and the trains would be packed choke-full. Arrived at Headquarters, batch after batch,—subsequently to a brief but exhaustive medical overhauling—would be despatched

to the arsenal, where attaching themselves to a tremendous *queue* of other Schmidt's, Schultz's, and Kunz's, they marked time in double-file outside a vast, grim, barn-like structure, until the moment arrived for entering; when with well-accustomed quickness, each would find his way to a certain hook or group of hooks, surmounted with his regimental number, from which depended a certain familiar uniform, with accoutrements and weapons equally well known.

Picture innumerable alleys formed by these dangling uniforms, radiating away to the point of distance,—and suppose Schmidt, Schultz, and Kunz equipped in something answering to the twinkling of a Teutonic eye.

In—supposing Schmidt, Schultz, or Kunz to belong to the Infantry—a pair of dark grey unmentionables, red-corded down the side-seams, and a pair of mid-leg-high boots, very roomy and strong. Inside the boots were no stockings, tallowed linen bands being bound about the legs and feet. A single-breasted tunic of dark blue cloth with red facings followed, and a flat forage-cap of blue cloth with a red band, or a glazed black leather helmet with a brazen Prussian eagle front-plate and a brass spike-top. With the addition of a zinc label, slung round the neck, and bearing a man's name, number, company, and regiment, an overcoat made into a sausage and tied together at the ends, a canvas haversack, glass leather-covered canteen, a pipeclayed waistbelt with two cartridge-boxes of black leather, and a knapsack of calf-skin tanned with the hair, stretched upon a wooden frame, and slung by two pipeclayed straps hooked to the waistbelt in front and then passing over the shoulders. Two shorter straps, going under the armpits, would be fastened to the knapsack, which had a receptacle for a packet of twenty cartridges at either end of it. Within, suppose the usual soldier's kit, with spoon, knife, fork, comb, and shaving-glass; and on top imagine a galvanised

iron pot, nolding about three quarts, with a tight-fitting cover which became, at need, a frying-pan. Arm with a strong waistbelt-sword about fifteen inches long, an unburnished needle-gun, heavily grease-coated, and Schmidt, Schultz, and Kunz, having hung their civilian garments on the hooks that erst supported the martial panoply, tugged at a final buckle-strap, wheeled and passed out, transformed, by yet another door.

Always the three had known that an hour would come when these familiar exercises would not end with half-a-dozen exceedingly strenuous field-days, and a return,—on the part of Schmidt and Schultz,—to the arms of their respective wives. Schmidt, on whose breast shone the war-medal of '66, and who must now be addressed as "Herr Sergeant" by his social superiors, seemed not to mind at all, though he swore at his boots, quite unjustly, for pinching. But the bank-clerk's espousals were too recent, and his first experience of paternity too near at hand, for any display of hardihood, while Herr Kunz was but newly-betrothed to the apothecary's daughter Mina, and could not forget how the tears had rolled out of her large blue eyes at the prospect of parting with her beloved Carl.

Therefore, although the mouths of the trio were, when not professionally shut, busily engaged in bellowing "*Die Wacht Am Rhein,*" "*Ich Bin Ein Preusse,*" and other patriotic songs, or sending up deafening "Hochs" for the King, the Crown Prince, Prince Friedrich Karl, "Our Moltke," and another public personage recently very much elevated in the popular esteem,—the mental visions of at least two of them were occupied with prophetic visions in which blue-eyed sweethearts pined and faded away out of grief for absent betrotheds, and young wives wept over empty cradles until they too expired, with faltering mes

sages of love for the husband so far distant on their dying lips. . . .

"*Sapperlot!* What in thunder are you gaping at, you *gimpel*, you?" a rough, loud voice would shout, and a terrific thump from the hard and heavy hand of Sergeant Schmidt would visit the shoulders of Private Schultz, or Kunz. Who thus addressed would jerk out:

"Oh, nothing, nothing, Herr Sergeant, truly nothing at all!" and receive from their recently-despised inferior the rude counsel to look alive and keep cheery:

"For this will be a war worth fighting in, mark you! The Man on the Seine has played the part of the Evil Neighbour too long. France and Prussia have got to come to clapperclaws—there's no help for it! The soup is cooked, so let us eat it. He is the luckiest who gets the spoon in first!"

You may suppose precisely similar scenes and dialogues occurring in the experience of Kraus, Klaus, and Klein, who, having served their time with the active Army and passed from the Reserve into the Landwehr, were now fetched out with the First Call, not only to replace the garrisons of Saxony, Prague, Pardubitz, and all the other fortified points on the lines of communication, but to guard and patrol those lines of road and railway over which the three marching armies were to receive supplies of food, ammunition, clothing, stores, and medicine; and maintain telegraphic communication with Berlin. Meanwhile Grein, Schwartz, and Braun, men of riper years, stiffer joints, and older experiences, remained at home; waiting the hour when, Death having thinned the ranks of the fighters in the forefront of the battle, the Second Call should sound. When these hardy veteran battalions, formed into divisions of the same numerical strength as those of the regular Army, would roll over the frontiers, to fill up the bloody gaps left by the scythe of the Red Mower, and play their part in the vast, chaotic, multi-tableauxed drama of War.

Prussia contributed some 652,294 actors of small parts to the said drama, not counting the leading men, stars of the war-theatre, who supported the heavier *rôles*. And Bavaria, Würtemburg, and Baden contributed their contingents, bringing up the strength of the cast to 780,923 performers. The equine actors numbered 213,159.

The vast machine worked wonderfully. It is interesting to know that the German Staff maps of France showed recently-made roads which in July, 1870, had not been marked upon any map issued by the Imperial War Office at Paris, and that within three days from that three-word signal-wire of Moltke's, military trains full of men, guns, horses, ammunition, and proviant, began to run at the rate of forty per day, from north, east, and south, towards the narrow frontier between Strasbourg and Luxembourg.

"For God and Fatherland!" and "Watch well the Rhine!" said the miniature banners carried by thousands of people. You could see them fluttering from crowded roofs and packed windows, and variegating the sidewalks of thoroughfares below, as regiment after regiment marched to the station, in shining rivers of *pickelhaubes* and bayonets, or Dragoon helmets, Hussar busbies, and Uhlan schapkas, flowing between upheaped banks of waving women and cheering men.

Speedily, in response to communications addressed by the Crown Prince to the South German sovereigns, notifying these potentates of his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of their armies, came replies expressing satisfaction of different shades and qualities. The Grand Duke of Baden's bubbled with joy, and expressed the determination of his troops to gain their Royal Commander's confidence by fidelity and bravery. The King of Würtemburg rejoiced likewise, but in cooler terms, "in our German

affair" being brought to a head at last; and is anxious to have the opportunity of saluting the heir of Prussia. The King of Bavaria telegraphed "*Very happy. Many thanks your Royal Highness's attention!*" A message which conveyed no more warmth than was felt.

His telegram of martial support, addressed at the outset of affairs to Onkel Wilhelm, had seemed quite genuine. Had not Count Bismarck quite a sheaf of documents, more or less compelling, signed in the youthful monarch's scrawling hand? King Ludwig had ordered immediate mobilisation of the dark green and light blue uniforms—expended millions of gulden in variegated lamps, public fountains of white beer and red wine, bands, Royal Command Opera performances, patriotic set-pieces in fireworks (representing the tutelary genii of Prussia and Bavaria, cuirassed and armed, upholding the standards of black-and-white and blue-and-white), joined in the "*Wacht Am Rhein*" as though he liked the tune (which he abhorred), and certainly enjoyed the tumultuous plaudits with which his subjects greeted their monarch's first and last appearance in the character of a man of action.

But instead of riding away at the head of the South German Army, Nephew Ludwig sent an excuse to Onkel Wilhelm—one has heard a gumboil named as occasion of the disability—and Cousin Fritz was despatched to take over chief command.

Prince Luitpold of Bavaria accompanied the First Army Headquarter Staff. Alas, the appointment but served to inflame the gumboil of the jealous King,—the accounts that were daily to reach him of the prowess of his martial cousin of Prussia worked like poison in his blood. He drew the hood of his mantle of dreams more closely over his head to shut out those fanfares of triumph, those "Hoch's!" and cheerings, and plunged more deeply into the solitudes of his forests and mountain-caves. Blood and

iron were his bugbears, and yet they might have been his tonics too. They might have staved off the black hound of Destiny, already baying at his heels, and saved him from vicious decadence, ultimate madness, and a strange and sordid end.

And yet, how did his chivalrous cousin die, at the meridian of robust manhood, under the newly-imposed weight of an Imperial Crown? Not the swift, soldierly death that is given by the bullet of a chassepot—the projectile from a mitrailleuse—the flying fragment of an exploding shrapnel-shell—but a straw-death, a bed-death, such as angry seers and cursing Valkyrs of Scandinavian legend, foretold as the speedy punishment of warriors who had broken faith, and tarnished by false oaths the brightness of their honour.

But no shadow of the grim fate that was to befall him darkened those brave blue eyes at this period. Labouring night and day at the mobilisation of his Third Army, in concert with his Chief of Staff, Von Blumenthal, he was buoyantly happy, despite his hatred of the shedding of blood and his undisguised compassion for the conjectured plight of the Man on the Seine.

With whom Britannia at first expressed a sympathy not at all restrained or guarded, and for the success of whose arms she was openly eager, until, towards the close of this momentous month of July, 1870, the text of a brief but pithy diplomatic document, penned in precise and elegant French, and dated a few years previously—made its appearance in the columns of the *Times*.

The movements of the opposing forces camped on the banks of the Meuse and the Saar lost interest for the public eye in perusal of this rough memorandum of a proposed treaty between the Third Napoleon and the King of Prussia, scrawled in Count Benedetti's flowing Italian hand.

Since the spring of '67 it had been hidden away in a snug corner of Bismarck's despatch-box, waiting to jump out. You recall the terms of the thing—one of many overt attempts to seize a coveted prize. The Empire of France was to recognise the acquisitions made by Prussia in the war of 1866 with Austria. Prussia was to aid Napoleon III. to buy from Holland the debateable Duchy of Luxembourg. The Emperor was to shed the lustre of his smile and the *ægis* of his approval upon Federal Union between the North German Parliament and the South German States—the separate sovereignty of each State remaining. In return, Prussia was to abet the Bonaparte in the military occupation and subsequent absorption of the Kingdom of Belgium. And in furtherance of these laudable ends, an alliance, offensive and defensive, against any Power, insular or otherwise, was to be compact between the great gilt eagle of the Third Empire and the black-plumaged bird across the frontier.

Britons, with inconveniently good memories, perusing this draft, recalled the existence of a treaty existing between France, England, and Prussia, mutually binding these Powers to protect the neutrality of Belgium, and drew reflections damaging to the betrayer and the betrayed. French diplomatists asserted that the project had been drawn up by Benedetti at Bismarck's dictation. Why preserve so explosive a document, they argued, if it was never to be drawn out and supplied with detonators in the shape of signatures ? Later on M. Rouher's boxes of official papers, found at his château of Cercay, gave up the original draft-treaty annotated in the Emperor's handwriting.

For it was his nature, may God pardon him ! to be false and specious, ungrateful and an oath-breaker. He must always repay great services with great wrongs. Thus in the red year 1870, England, who in '54 had poured out

blood and treasure lavishly to aid him, receiving this plain proof of treachery, stood sorrowfully back and saw him rush upon his fate. Sick and desperate, madly hurling his magnificent Army hither and thither upon the arena, a Generalissimo out-generalled before the War was a week old.

He had made France his mistress and his slave, and now her fetters were to be hacked apart by the merciless sword of the invader. Through losses, privations, and humiliations; through an ordeal of suffering unparalleled in the world's history; through an orgie of vice and an era of infidelity—through fresh oceans of blood, shed from the veins of her bravest, she was to pass before she found herself and GOD again.

Meanwhile, North, East, South and West, prevailed a great swarming scurry of military preparation, the tunes of the "*Wacht Am Rhein*" and "*Heil Dir Im Siegerkranz*" clashing with "*Partant Pour La Syrie*" and the "*Marseillaise*"; and the solemn strains of masses rising up together with Lutheran litanies, as two great nations strove to convince Divine Omnipotence that Codlin deserved to whip, and not Short.

Strange! that Christian men, who frankly confess themselves to be sinners, worms, and dust-grains before the supreme Majesty of the Creator, should be so prone to offer Him advice.

XXX.

THE lovely lady whose lace parasol P. C. Breagh had picked up at the bottom of the Prussian Chancellor's staircase, was driven, by the tipsy-faced Jehu of a debilitated hack-cab, to a semi-fashionable hotel situated in a gravelled courtyard facing towards the Linden. The bureau-manager looked

out of his glass-case as she swept her rustling draperies over the dusty Brussels carpets of the vestibule, and muttered to the pale-faced ledger-clerk at his side:

"A representative from the firm of Müller and Stettig, Charlotten-Strasse, has called three times to see the lady in Suite 35. With a jewellery account for payment, promised and deferred."

The clerk assented with a nod of the double-barrelled order, and reaching an envelope from a numbered pigeon-hole offered it for the inspection of his superior.

"Baroness von Valverden," sniffed the bureau-manager, and in his turn reached a squat red Almanach de Gotha from the top of a pile of ledgers, and ruffled the leaves with an industrious thumb.

"It is as I thought—there is no Baroness von Valverden. Baron Ernst von Schön-Valverden is a minor and a bachelor, private in the —th Regiment of Potsdam Infantry of the Guard. This must be the Frenchwoman I have heard of as mixed up in the scandal connected with the death of Baron Maximilian at Schönfeld in the Altenwald some years ago. He left Madame a lapful of thalers—I suppose she has played *skat* with the money. Not that that matters if the hook-nosed, long-haired Slav she has got with her upstairs has the cash to settle with us! But if not——"

The manager's tone was ominous. The clerk scratched his nose with the feather-end of his pen, and said admiringly:

"If not, the Herr Bureau-Director will give orders to detain their valises and trunks?"

The bureau-manager smiled, and said, jerking his chin at another envelope reposing in the numbered pigeon-hole:

"Send that up at once and let them know we will stand no nonsense. Keep Müller and Stettig's back for the present. Understand?"

And the clerk nodded again, and whistled down a tube, and evoked from regions below a brass-buttoned, gilt-braided functionary, to whom he entrusted the missive indicated, which bore the monogram of the hotel-company, and indeed contained their bill.

It was handed to Madame by the brass-buttoned functionary just as she reached the ante-room of her second-floor suite of apartments. She took it from the salver, and said without looking at it:

"Presently!"

The functionary gave a peremptory verbal message. She repeated:

"Presently, sir, presently. . . . At this moment I am exceedingly fatigued!"

The brass-buttoned functionary begged to remind the gracious lady of similar excuses previously received by the management. At this she turned upon him the battery of her magnificent eyes. Always economical of her forces, she had removed her torn tulle veil during the cab-drive, and with a delicate powder-puff drawn from a jewelled case dependant from her golden *châtelaine*, removed from her lovely face all traces of emotion. Only a spiteful woman would have called her thirty-five. . . . And the functionary was a man, despite his brass buttons and gilt braiding. When she smiled, he caved in, bowed, and left her. But he did not forget to leave the bill.

She had it in her hand as she entered the drawing-room of the suite of apartments, one of those impossibly-shaped, fantastically-uncomfortable salons, possessing a multiplicity of doors and windows, upholstered with rose-satin, and crusted with ormolu, such as are only seen in foreign hotels and upon the stage. Despite the sultry heat of the July weather the windows were shut, their Venetian blinds lowered, and their thick lace curtains drawn over these. And in a rose-coloured arm-chair, with twisted golden legs

and arms and an absurd back-ornament like an Apollonian lyre, huddled a dark, hawk-featured, powerfully-built man of something less than forty, wrapped in a short, wide coat lined, cuffed, and collared with black Astrakhan; wearing a travelling-cap similarly lined, and presenting the appearance of one who suffers from a cold of the snuffly, catarrhal kind.

He sneezed as Madame surged across the threshold, and would have told her to shut the door, only that she divined his intention and forestalled him, throwing her parasol upon a sofa and sinking into a chair as ridiculous as his own. Yet when her wealth of pale-hued draperies poured over it, and the ripe outlines of her voluptuous form concealed its crudities of design and colouring, it could be forgiven for being in bad taste.

She looked in silence at the travelling-cap, not at its sulky wearer, until, conscious of her sustained regard, he raised his hand to his head. In haste then, as though she dreaded the shock of his purposeful abstention from the customary courtesy, she said:

"Do not take it off! Pray keep it on!"

"Thanks!" He uttered the word laconically, drooping his immense, blackly-lashed eyelids over his fierce and staring eyes. They, too, were black, with the white, hard glitter of polished jet; black also were the great curved eyebrows, the coarse and shining hair that fell to his shoulders, the parted moustache, and the wedge-shaped beard that depended from his boldly-curved chin. Rippling in small, regular waves, suggestive of the labour of a primitive sculptor's chisel, the inky *chevelure* of this man with the cold,—taken in conjunction with his large, aquiline nose, deep chest, fleshy torso, and thick muscular limbs, reproduced the type of an ancient Assyrian warrior, represented in some carved and painted wall-frieze of Nineveh or Babylon as marching in a triumphant procession

of Shalmaneser or Sennacherib. Even the conical head-dress was reproduced by the modern cap with ear-pieces, and turned-up border; and the deep yellowish-white of the alabaster in which the ancient sculptor wrought his bas-relief was reproduced in thick, smooth, unblemished skin.

Handsome as he undoubtedly was in his exotic, Oriental style, even in spite of influenza, Madame contemplated him with ill-concealed distaste. To a woman who loves, what matters the temporary thickening of the beloved object's profile, even when accompanied by attacks of sneezing and a running at the nose and eyes? She can wait the day when his voice will clear, and his leading feature will regain its former beauty. That is, as long as she continues to love.

The passion of this man and this woman had in its brief time burned high and fiercely. So does a fire of paper or straw. Now Passion lay dying, and Satiety and Weariness were the only watchers by the death-bed. Every twenty-four hours that passed over the heads of the couple brought nearer the hour when these would give place to Hatred and Dislike. And meanwhile both were infinitely hipped.

"Every window. . . . Every curtain. . . . Must we, then, asphyxiate? . . ." At the end of her patience, she made an angry gesture as though to loosen the riband of mauve velvet that held a diamond locket at the base of her round white throat, bit her full lip—and let her hand drop idly into her silken lap again.

Her companion stretched out a pair of muscular, but shortish legs, encased in dark green trousers with braided side-stripes, and looked with interest at his patent boots. Then he answered, speaking with a drawling, nasal accent:

"Unless M. de Bismarck has supplied you with the

means of averting a singularly-unpleasant catastrophe, it may be that the answer to your question should be 'Yes'!"

She understood that he questioned, and said, drooping her proud, languorous eyes under the hard black stare of his:

"You would be wiser to speak in a lowered tone, when you refer to—that personage. One does not trifle with him—here or elsewhere!"

"The Pommeranian bear," said her companion, pouting a slightly swollen lip, and dabbing gingerly at his reddened nostrils with a voluminous cambric handkerchief exhaling the heavy perfume of opoponax, "has claws and fangs. Also a hug, in which friends of mine have stifled. But they were men—and you are an enchanting woman!" He removed his cap and bowed; resuming: "Besides you went to M. le Ministre with a trump in your hand—a little Queen of Diamonds, fresh as a rosebud. Have you played her, may I ask?"

He got up, pocketing his handkerchief, came over to her and stood beside her, in the upright attitude which called attention to the disproportion between his huge torso and his too-short legs. He held his furred cap upon his hip with one hand, and with the other stroked his waved wedge-beard. The rasping sound made by his heavily-ringed fingers as they passed through the thick, crisp hairs irritated her to anguish. Yet not so long ago it had thrilled her to sensuous ecstasy.

"I played the girl—and I have lost!" Almost against her will a cry broke from her. "My God! what things he said to me! My God! what humiliations we women endure for men!"

"I had imagined, my Adelaide," said he of the Assyrian hair and profile, showing in a smile a double row of teeth so perfect that they struck the imagination as being carved

out of two solid curves of ivory—" that you were playing for your own advantage—even when you played my game. Did M. le Comte mention me at any point of the interview ?"

She started at the unexpected question. Her voice shook a little in the reply.

" He said that he had heard—that M. de Straz had lately visited Berlin. That his agents would tell him. Of course !"

" He said nothing of—a flying visit of mine to Sigmaringen ?"

She answered hastily:

" I think not. No !—I am quite certain he did not."

" No ?"

Straz sniffed and whipped out his handkerchief, grumbling:

" Yet the purport of my mission to that South German crow's-nest was known to him—here in Berlin—I can prove it !—by nightfall of the day I interviewed the Prince." He added, trumpeting in his handkerchief, " Of course, M. Bismarck has spies everywhere. But all the same it was quick work !"

Her face was immovable. No guilty flush stained its smooth ivory surface. Only the lines about her scarlet mouth sharpened, that was all.

Straz went on, peevishly, strolling to the fireplace, and leaning an elbow on the corner of the mantelshelf.

" I suppose they call that princely hospitality—to send a man who has travelled night and day, and was decanted out of a crazy railway-station *droschke* at the door of their confounded *Stammschloss* at five o'clock in the morning—to an inn !"

She said in a velvet tone of amorous insinuation, and with a glance of sleepy fire:

" To an inn where Love lay waiting ! . . ."

"Truly," he admitted, "but how were they to know that you were there? What possible connection could have been imagined between two chance travellers—I—arriving from Paris—you coming from Berlin? Besides—to send me to a summer tavern on the banks of the Danube! —when they have two hundred bedrooms at the Schloss! If that is princely hospitality, I tell you that I spit upon it! I grind it under the heel of my boot!"

Her nostrils dilated with disgust as he demonstrated by spitting on the hearthrug. She said, meeting his angry black stare with eyes that were of the colour of tawny wine:

"The Prince cannot have regretted his omission to accommodate you with an apartment, when the Emperor's message was made known to him!"

He demanded:

"Am I a hired bravo? *Pardieu!* your words suggest it. Were either of the old man's sons in danger personally, from me? Not at all! I but repeated a lesson—gave a warning as it had been given. . . . But I understand—you have been chagrined by the nature of your reception from the Federal Chancellor!"

She returned, now flushed and breathing deeply:

"It is true. I suffocate at the recollection. Give me time to breathe!"

She rose. Straz said, going over to her, taking both her hands, kissing them and replacing her in her chair:

"Compose yourself. Let me understand the attitude M. le Ministre is taking. I need not remind you that not until I had learned from you, that through the lamented Count Valverden, you were sufficiently acquainted with M. de Bismarck to obtain an interview, did I suggest that you should seek one. Well, you did, and it has taken place. You told him of the little episode I witnessed in January—on the day of the funeral of Victor Noir at

Neuilly. Monseigneur the Prince Imperial was riding with his governor and escort—the Avenue of the Champs Élysées was blocked by troops. A charming girl threw M. Lulu a bunch of violets—made a little scene of loyalty and enthusiasm in contrast with the unamiable attitude of the crowd assembled. An equerry dismounted and gave the flowers to Monseigneur. He carried them with him as he galloped towards the Bois de Boulogne. Nothing of importance in that, perhaps, had he not afterwards sent for the equerry who had picked up the flowers, and said to him, blushing, '*Pray tell me who was she?*' So skilled a master of phrases as M. de Bismarck could hardly have undervalued the question from the heir to an Empire, taken in combination with the blush. Or discounted the importance of the fact that, later, when the equerry brought him the information that the charming unknown was the daughter and only child of a certain gallant Colonel commanding the 777th Regiment of mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard—at that moment quartered at Versailles,—Monseigneur said, with another blush as ingenuous as the first, 'I am glad she is the daughter of so brave a soldier! Possibly I may meet her one of these days?' Being told that her baptismal name was 'Juliette' he blushed once more, and wrote it down,—together with Mademoiselle's surname and address,—in a little memorandum-book he habitually carries. . . . And there, my exquisite Adelaide—if your narrative style did credit to my teaching, the interest of M. de Bismarck should have been engaged."

She lowered her chin and drooped her sombre eyelids, and said with curling lips:

"It was. He took out his watch, and told me: 'I can hear you for three minutes longer! Has the Prince Imperial—with the disinterested assistance of those about him, altered that possibility into a certainty?' I explained

to him then that nothing further had come of the *rencontre*, —though measures had been taken to preserve Monseigneur's interest from dying for lack of excitement, bouquets of violets being sent to him at regular intervals, with a slip of paper attached to the stems, upon which had been written in an unformed, girlish hand—'*From one who prays for the Hope of France!*' "

"And then? . . ."

"Then M. de Bismarck spoke, keeping his thumb all the time on the watch-dial: 'So! The girl plays the part of an *ingénue* for the present! Will she keep these airs of candour and innocence when she has got her claws on that poor stripling? And do you suggest that the Prussian Secret Service should supply her with funds for the carrying out of her design, whatever it may be? Are we to lay our heads together, like the Brethren in the libretto of Mehul's opera 'Joseph,' and sing in chorus: '*This is the heir. Come, let us kill him!*' "

"Even Beelzebub," said Straz, "can quote from Scripture when it suits him. I suppose you were annoyed, and showed it—which was an error of judgment on your part!"

"I rose up," said she, and suited the action to the word, "with indignation, assuring M. de Bismarck that his suspicions were unjust. That the young girl mentioned was of ancient family and irreproachable morals, convent-bred and highly-educated. And that I, myself, being her nearest living relative of her own sex, was able to vouch for the fact. I added that the interest displayed in her by Monseigneur the Prince—who until that moment had never been known to look at a woman—led me, as her mother, to conceive that by aid of a few deft hints, a little discreet encouragement—another distant glimpse—a meeting accidentally brought about in some retired spot favourable to the revival of first impressions, an influence might be brought to bear upon the Imperial boy which might

develop his mind and mould his character. Somehow in my agitation the name of Juliette de Bayard escaped me. 'De Bayard,' exclaimed M. de Bismarck. 'So! You are her mother!' Great Heaven!—the intolerable tone in which he uttered the words! Only the most abandoned of her sex could have supported the insulting irony of the look accompanying them. Choking, I took my leave. . . . He accompanied me to the staircase, with a false appearance of courtesy. As I turned to descend, he hurled the last insult of all! Nicolas, do not ask me to repeat the sentences!—and yet, I must have them written in another memory. . . . He twitted me with my nationality before his secretary and servants. He likened me to a mythological character with an unpronounceable name. . . . He said only a modern mother would be infamous enough to devote her only daughter to Venus Something-Or-Other. . . . Next to my husband, I detest that man!"

Straz had been pulling at his moist red underlip as she raved out her story, in a frenzy of rage and resentment, intensified by the necessity of speaking in a lowered tone. Now he dragged the feature out as though it had been made of india-rubber, let it snap back, and said, shrugging his bull's shoulders and getting up:

"You are a woman and he is—Bismarck! He does not for the moment want the wares you desire to sell him. It is unlike him—the diplomat who could encourage M. Benedetti to lay before him the Emperor's *projet de traité* in writing—and lock it away for use at a future opportunity—not to be willing to secure an advantage—placed before him with clearness and skill—in the newly-awakened fancy of a schoolboy who, if he lives, will be an Emperor—for a charming and innocent young girl!" He pronounced these words as though they were smeared with something sweet and luscious, licking his lips gently, and rolling his dead black eyes in sensual enjoyment. "As regards your hus-

band, he has certainly not replied to the letter of your solicitors, but why do you hate the unlucky man ?"

"Do you ask ?" Adelaide demanded, with glittering eyes and heaving bosom. "Did he not refuse to divorce me ? Should I not have legally borne the title of Baroness von Valverden if his sentimental prejudices had not blocked the way ?"

Straz pulled his waved beard, and said, delicately separating a strand of it from the rest, and keeping it between his thick white fingers:

"Sentimental, why sentimental ? Do you not even give him credit for sufficient spirit to resent being made ridiculous ? The desire to be revenged—you will not even allow him that ?"

She bit her scarlet underlip and answered, breathing quickly:

"He was too good, too high-minded—too chivalrous—oh ! 'tis ridiculous, I admit !" for Straz commenced to titter silently, screwing up the corners of his eyes and shaking his shoulders, as he sat with his thick, short arms folded on his chest. "An idea to make you hug yourself as you are doing. But true, nevertheless ! He would have said—at this distance of time I can still hear him preaching: '*I will avenge the injury to my honour when I am confronted with my enemy. I will not revenge myself upon the woman who deserted me for him !*' "

The words came, not in her own voice. Straz left off sniggering. He said to himself, considering her through narrowed lids:

"Those were de Bayard's actual words. I wonder, since she has neither seen or heard from him since she left him, how it is she knew that they were spoken ? Some obliging mutual friend may have repeated them. Or she read them in some letter of his, written to Count Valverden. That is quite possible. But the question is, whether she would

detest him so bitterly if her passion for him were absolutely extinguished. She is even jealous when one speaks of their daughter, whom he worships. . . . I will play her on this string—it may be useful, who knows ?"

Aloud he said:

"Detest your husband, dear friend, if it affords you entertainment. Probably he deserves it, though women I have met who knew him, vowed him *un crème d'homme,* worthy of the name he bears." He smiled in his beard, hearing her foot tap upon the shining parquet, and went on. "Men have praised his gallantry and his disinterestedness——"

"'Disinterestedness!'" she mocked. "Truly—to the point of fanaticism he is disinterested. Have we not to thank that characteristic for the ruin of our plans ?"

Said Straz:

"A little more subtlety upon the part of your solicitors, and you might have found M. le Colonel less obstinately inclined to discourage the idea of a reconciliation. To have entrusted a portrait to the hands of the lawyers would have been an excellent move. Once convinced that the thirteen or fourteen years that have elapsed since you—parted—have increased rather than diminished the beauty that once he worshipped—and I fancy de Bayard would have accepted your terms !"

He sniggered, and waited as the violet shadows about her brilliant eyes deepened, and she breathed more quickly. Then he went on:

"They were generous—I allude to the conditions. Ninety men out of a hundred would have accepted them. For what has de Bayard to condone that others have not winked at ? You were a mere girl, weary of separation from a husband who doubtless consoled himself after his own fashion, for his detention in the Crimea. Bored to desperation—condemned to spend your days in the care of a child,

and in listening to the imbecile grumblings of a sick old devotee,—point out to me the woman, young, beautiful, brilliant, and ambitious—who would not—in your place—have done precisely as you did ?"

She threw her head a little backwards, bringing into prominence the superb modelling of her columnar throat and the heavy lines of the lower jaw. Her wine-coloured eyes considered him between their narrowed lids. She savoured his words, silently, with palpitating nostrils, and rippling movements of the muscles of her tightly-closed lips. And the qualities of treachery and cruelty, mingling in her strange character with sensuality, and pride, and recklessness, were written upon her beauty as plainly as they are stamped upon the individuality of a tigress, or a poisonous snake.

"You speak of weariness . . . of boredom . . ." She spoke between her teeth, accentuating the vowels and prolonging the sibilants: "Nicolas, it was hellish—that *ménage* at Auteuil ! . . ." She clenched the white hand that rested on the chair-arm, and continued, looking with burning eyes through Straz into the past.

"That woman—my husband's mother, with her parade of devotion for the absent. With her ceaseless repetition of 'my son,' 'my son's child,' and 'my son's wife !' . . . *Grand Dieu !*—how she enraged me ! How she made me hate—hate—hate them !—yes ! all three. . . . Perhaps myself also, most bitterly of all !"

"We have a curious proverb in my country," commented Straz, with his snigger: "'*I draw water from a well that has no bottom when I tell my gossip of the faults of my mother-in-law !*'"

She said, with undisguised scorn:

"I am not a collector of curios from your country !"

"Ah, but wait ! Hear the rest of it !" said Straz, dexterously embroidering on the original: "'*But when my*

mother-in-law wishes to acquaint my husband with my good qualities, she will write them with the plume from a gnat's head, on the paper that wrapped a butterfly's egg, when she has bought her ink at the shop where they sell none!"

Adelaide continued, ignoring the laboured witticism:

"In the letter of farewell that I wrote to de Bayard I said '*Your mother will console you, I have no doubt!*' . . . How often I have imagined I could hear her talking to him. . . . He would weep on her knees, like a schoolboy. She would lead him to look at the child, asleep in its cot by the side of her bed, and tell him, '*Do not fear! She will not be like her mother! She will grow up candid and discreet and virtuous!*' Everything that Adelaide was not, you understand. . . . Ha, ha, ha! Absurd old creature! Were she not dead, I should detest her still!"

Straz mentally commented:

"The daughter has inherited the hatred, unless I am mistaken." Aloud he said:

"The prophecy, if made, has not been fulfilled, my Adelaide. . . . Mademoiselle, if inferior to her mother in splendour of beauty, certainly has been dowered with her elegance and charm." He bunched the fingers of his right hand, kissed them, and launched the kiss, conjecturally, in the direction of Paris. "A pocket edition of Psyche before that little affair with Cupid! A rare jewel! A *chic* type, give you my word!"

The daintily-shod foot had beaten time, as Straz enlarged upon the theme of Juliette's perfections, to what might have been the tune of a tarantella: now it ceased. She laughed in the Roumanian's face, and cried, still laughing:

"A child! . . . A schoolgirl—who has seen no more of the world than the pearl in the oyster! All this is too funny—*give you my word!*"

Said Straz, lolling his head against the chair-back and licking his red lips cattishly:

" Ah, but when the pearl-diver opened the oyster, he said: '*Here is a gem worth a Kingdom, or an Empire, when it shall be polished and properly set!*' "

" ' Or an Empire !' "

She echoed the three words, throwing her head back in imitation of Straz's attitude, and looking at him with languid provocation. Then she yawned, showing her perfect teeth and the tip of a rosy tongue, and remarked with an air of boredom:

" My friend, whether your pearl be worth an Empire or a cabbage-plot, your chance of proving its value is for ever forfeited, thanks to the obstinacy of Henri de Bayard."

Said Straz:

" Our plan would have been easier to carry out,—had de Bayard been more—*complaisant.*"

She rose up, her beautiful face livid and gray under its artificial roses. Her eyebrows writhed like little live snakes, her eyes burned like wind-blown torches. She spoke, looking past her confederate in the chair, and with a voice he barely recognised:

" His mother must have prayed her Saints for this," she said, " that I should always fail in the moment when triumph seemed most sure. Max Valverden would have married me—it is absolutely certain !—had not Fate sent him back on leave from the Staff in Austria but a couple of hours too soon. Weak, sentimental Max ! always threatening extreme measures. Who would have believed him capable of carrying out that menace so often reiterated ! But this I know. Had he confronted me with what his letter termed '*the unmistakable proofs of my appalling treachery,*' I would have convinced him even against the testimony of his own ears and eyes. But de Bayard—but my husband !——"

She had forgotten Straz; she saw nothing but her own

frustrated ambitions, and the dead body of the man whose suicide had robbed her of a title, and the living husband whose stern rejection of her overtures had left her for ever outside the social pale. . . .

"Do I not know the man he is! With another it would have been so easy. He would have granted an interview,—I would have been suppliant and humble,—I would have told my tale in such a voice! . . . *You were away. . . . I was young and inexperienced. . . . I foolishly yielded to the persuasions of another. . . . Once I had let Valverden kiss me I felt myself smirched for ever. I fled with him because I dared not meet your eyes!*"

Straz sniggered. She went on, not hearing him. . . .

"He would have taken me to his heart again. Once reinstated there I would have regained the *entrée* to Society. For a woman who has lived within the pale—even if she finds it better fun outside—it is hideous to be *déclassée*. A few triumphs,—a little intriguing—and I should have been received at Court. . . . For the Emperor is above all a man of the world; and the Empress loves to surround herself with beautiful and witty women. With gifts, talents, charm like mine, I should have carried all before me!—I should have reigned—I should have drunk the wine of Success from a goblet of diamond."

"Without doubt," agreed Straz, "had M. le Colonel consented to receive you. Yet I contend, his refusal is a hopeful sign, if it means that he is afraid."

She winced as though he had thrust a knife in her side, and cried out:

"Afraid! You do not know him. . . . No!—I tell you, that it is to him as though I had never existed. . . . Did we meet, he would look me in the face—pass me by without the twitch of a muscle—without the flicker of a glance. . . . But you have shown me how I may reach his heart—and one day I shall thrust my hand into his breast and tear it

out and trample on it. . . . It is she—my daughter—who will accomplish this ! . . .”

Said Straz, pushing back his chair, getting up and blowing his nose loudly:

“ Then the sooner we exchange these avenues of dusty lime-trees, choked with crowds of bellowing Teutons, for the boulevards of Paris, the better. We shall, of course, be forced to return by a *détour via* Brussels—the Rhine Valley railways being reserved for the transport of troops. Passports can be had on application to the usual authorities. The only insuperable obstacle to our departure is—the bill !”

Madame came back to consciousness of sordid things as the Roumanian ostentatiously turned out his trouser-pockets.

“ You are at an *impasse* for lack of funds ?” she asked him.

“ Upon my life, my soul !” Straz smilingly assured her, “ I am at present without a radish ! A sum of two thalers negotiable currency constitutes my stock of cash. Although, as I have told you, I carry secreted on my person an order for ”—he tapped his bosom—“ ten thousand francs payable from the Secret Funds of the Imperial Government. This I tried to cash before I left Paris——” He measured off an infinitesimal quantity of finger-nail and displayed it to her. “ Do you think I got a franc from anyone ? No !—you know better ! The Emperor's methods are understood too well. And thus it is that the disinclination of M. de Bismarck to finance our plan for the union of two young and ingenuous lovers has hit me in the midriff. A thousand curses on his niggardliness !”

As though prompted by some recollection of Adelaide's previous display of tragic passion, he scowled portentously, spat at the fireplace, then began to strut about, vapouring and waving his ringed, hairy-backed hands.

"Penniless. . . . What damnable absurdity! The Emissary of a Potentate! The Bearer of the Bowstring—with Life or Death in my hand. For lack of cash I travel second-class to that accursed South German Principality—I stoop to put up at a third-rate inn. My Mission performed, I yield to the promptings of my ardent nature. In the company of her who reigns sultana of my soul,—who for my sake has shared the discomforts of that abominable caravanserai—I return to the barbarous capital of the Hohenzollerns—I risk my person in the streets of Berlin. Had my brain been cooler—had your image glowed less seductively before my mental vision"—he rolled his black eyes amorously and laid a thick ringed hand upon his breast—"it may be that I should not have accompanied you,—that I might have hurried back express to Paris—presented myself to my Imperial master—and reaped the golden prize!"

"Say rather," responded Madame, in a tone not untinged with acrimony, "that as the result of your unsuccessful endeavour to enlist the interest of M. de Bismarck in that charming plan to unite two ingenuous young people—you are placed in a position that is not without unpleasant possibilities. My *beaux yeux* are less to blame than your ambition '*to kill*,' as the English say, '*two birds with one stone!*' You——"

"Say 'we,' not 'you,' my divine Adelaide," corrected Straz, with tender insistence, "for if not in actuality husband and wife, we are thus inscribed upon the bureau-register. 'One in sorrow, one in joy,' to quote a poet of my nation. I wish you were acquainted with the verses of Stepan Mieciwycz. They would afford you exquisite delight."

"Possibly," said Madame, with an ominous hardening of the facial muscles, and a whiteness about the lips. "What does not afford me delight is that these brigands

downstairs have threatened to seize our luggage if their claim is not satisfied within an hour."

"*Sapristi!*" commented the Roumanian. "A beautiful imbroglio! And—as I have no luggage—beyond a travelling valise," he added with a gentle snigger, "your trunks, bonnet-boxes, imperials, travelling-bags, and so forth—must become the prey of the management. It grieves me to the soul that you should suffer this denudation at the hands of these coarse Germans. But what I cannot prevent, I can but deplore!"

"And if," she said in a vibrating voice of anger, "these coarse Germans should lay hands upon your person, for the purpose of ascertaining for themselves the state of your purse! . . . What then?"

"What then?" Straz's cynical composure broke up. "*Istenem!—Istenem!* Nothing could be more dangerous! My letter of instructions from M. de Gramont, annotated in the Emperor's own hand! The official letter of introduction from the Minister to Prince Antony—the copies of those three telegrams His Highness sent from Sigmaringen—the order on the Privy Purse—all concealed in a silk belt I am in the habit of wearing—these Prussians will find the papers should they search me to the skin. Then I, *with my wife*——" He italicised the sentences.

"One in sorrow as in joy, I think you said!" interpolated Madame, bitterly.

"We should be arrested—dragged before official interrogators!—imprisoned!—Oh! do not imagine I am laying on the colours too thickly. Is it incredible that M. de Bismarck might welcome an opportunity—pending the result of this war—to turn the key on us?"

"Why on *us?*" demanded Adelaide. "Do *I* wear a silken belt containing incriminating letters? Orders on the Secret Funds . . . copies of Hohenzollern telegrams?"

Straz looked at her, and his black stare hardened sus-

piciously. The swift Oriental blood that pigmented his eyes and skin, and fed the luxuriant growth of hair upon him, leaped in the dark to the conclusion that he had been betrayed. He said, smiling, and speaking with a lisp, a trick of his that boded ill, had she but known it:

"Not to my knowledge. . . . I have never searched whilst you were sleeping,—or spiced the draught that made the sleep profound."

"My thanks," she said, keeping her countenance magnificently, "for the glass of mulled Burgundy I gave you when you returned from the Schloss. You were suffering from chill—you shivered and burned alternately. . . . Like a woman, I did what I could—and you are ungrateful, like all other men."

"My soul," simpered Straz, "I adore you madly. But like every other man, I am a son of Adam, and you are a daughter of Madame Eve. And a little snake hisses in my ear whenever I am not looking at you: '*She would be truer to her sex if she were false!*' "

"Nicolas! This is too much! No, no, I beg of you to let me leave you!"

Adelaide had put her hand to her heart, given him a look in which passionate tenderness seemed to strive with wounded pride, quitted her chair, and hurried, the Roumanian hot upon her heels, to the door communicating with the boudoir. Detained by his feverish grasp upon her hand, prisoned by the muscular arm about her waist, she could only reiterate her desire for freedom. Straz asseverated:

"Yes! when you have forgiven me! Pardon, beloved Adelaide! Life of my life, you know we Slavs are naturally suspicious—it is always in our blood!"

He thrust his face to hers, amorously ogling. The slight thickening of the consonants, due to catarrh, made his

passionate speech sound grotesquely ridiculous. The approach of his mouth, the contact of his breath, reminded the fastidious Adelaide that such colds could be transferred. So she smiled dazzlingly upon him, and gently freed herself from his enfolding tentacles, leaning her softly-tinted cheek downwards to the shoulder her own overtopped.

"You are pardoned, my beloved one! But think with me how this bill may be settled! What if you really should be in danger in this place!"

He shrugged hopelessly, and ejaculated:

"*Sapristi!* I can conceive it possible. . . . But—hampered by the lack of money, what are we to do?"

She said with a start, as if suddenly enlightened:

"Dearest, I have some jewels. . . . Think nothing of the sacrifice! . . . Will it not be made for him who is more to me than all? . . ."

"Angel! . . . Now I know, indeed, that Adelaide is true to me! Pardon thy slave, who dared to deem otherwise!"

Straz devoured her hand with kisses, became more enterprising as she grew, or seemed to grow, more yielding. But she put him from her, suffering her bright glance to linger on him amorously, saying in tones of liquid sweetness, with a bewitching accent of rebuke:

"Be good now! I am tired, and must positively dine in my room to-night. My maid will bring you in a few moments a case containing—what I mentioned just now. Late as it is, shops are still open . . . there is a firm of jewellers—Müller and Stettig in the Charlotten-Strasse, who will buy such things for ready-money. . . . It should bring sufficient to supply us with funds for a long time. . . . Poor Valverden paid eighteen thousand thalers for it!" She added as Straz licked his lips appreciatively: "It is a star of emeralds and brilliants you have often seen me wear."

"Thou art my star! O incomparable Adelaide!"

She pushed him from her, yet oozing with impassioned admiration. She gently shut the boudoir-door—and noiselessly shot the bolt. Then her face changed, and all her disgust for Straz, his cheap compliments—his slovenliness—his arrogance and self-satisfaction, his impecuniousness and his cold in the head, was written on her face and expressed by every movement of her body. She ran across the boudoir, abandoning her air of languor, burst into the bedroom beyond, and aroused a dozing maid.

"Wake up, Mariette! Find me—it is in the red morocco jewel-case in the brown leather imperial—the diamond star with emerald points!"

While the woman rummaged, the mistress swiftly reviewed the situation. The cold, clear brain that dwelt behind that velvet mask of sensuous beauty had formulated a plan for getting rid of the Slav.

He would be an enemy dangerous as a rattlesnake, she told herself. But—trap your rattlesnake, and he cannot bite. On the other hand, his subtle capacity for intrigue—his swift Oriental cunning—even his masculine strength,—made of him a useful ally, even when he had no more secrets for a clever woman to ferret out and sell.

For the brief telegram in cipher, despatched by Madame to a studiously unsuspicious address in Berlin before nightfall of the day of the arrival in Sigmaringen—with the later-sent copies of Gramont's letters—the formal introduction which had secured the Agent from the Tuileries an audience of Prince Antony, and the four pages of secret instructions margined with the Emperor's annotations, had brought in a handsome sum of money, thanks to the potency of mulled Burgundy heavily dosed with laudanum. Adelaide had known a moment of deadly terror when the Slav's black eyes had looked at her with that sinister stare of suspicion, and his conjectures had leaped in the dark, so very near

the actual verity. She felt no desire to encounter that look again.

So she pondered, fingering the bulky roll of Prussian banknotes paid her by Privy Councillor Bucher a few days previously,—how she might best get rid of Straz without another scene. His Oriental cunning, his childish vanity, his petulance and sensuality, his colossal greed of money and money's worth, blinded her to the ruthlessness and ferocity of his tigerish nature, and provoked her to brave a risk far greater than she guessed.

She would get rid of him—play the game he had devised, without him; and win, in spite of cold water thrown by M. de Bismarck. The trap he had planned to catch the son of the Emperor should yet be set successfully. Was not the intended bait of living maiden's flesh her own?

She felt no pity for the innocence of the girl, or for the inexperience of the stripling. She was curious to know how—under given circumstances—they would comport themselves; she was eager to bring to terms the Minister who had contemptuously rejected her proposal—she thirsted above all for revenge upon the husband she had wronged.

Straz stood in the way, therefore Straz must be swept aside. His mission to Prince Antony performed, the Napoleon would have no more use for the instrument. Perhaps that order on the Privy Purse would never be cashed at all.

She arrived at this conclusion as the maid brought the red morocco jewel-case. She unlocked it with a key she wore in a bracelet, and drew out a shagreen-covered box containing the vaunted ornament. It had not been given her by her dead lover; the story of the thousands spent on it was no more reliable than the doubleted emeralds, and the thin central star of diamonds set flush with the gold setting of the toy.

But it looked well; and Straz was no good judge of jewels, and she had not paid Müller and Stettig the moderate sum demanded as its price. The merchants had been rude enough to dun her, and when Straz should appear and tender the article for sale to them, the manager would summon a policeman, and the Roumanian would be detained. He would refer to herself, but long before a representative of the firm could appear to interrogate her, she would have paid the hotel-bill and departed, leaving the price of the trinket in the hands of the management. Flaws in the plan, no doubt, but on the whole it was workable. She rose, took the star from the case stamped with the too-revealing names of Müller and Stettig, glanced in the mirror, left the bedroom and swept through the boudoir.

"Nicolas!" she whispered, unbolting the door noiselessly, and opening it a little way.

"My Peri, I am here!" snuffled the impassioned Roumanian.

She opened the door a little further, and thrust out a white palm cradling the glittering gewgaw. He pounced on it, leaving a kiss instead.

"Remember, Müller and Stettig, 85, Charlotten Strasse. Fly!"

"Sultana, I depart upon the wings of Love, to return like the bee to the rose, laden with golden pollen."

"Your wings, unlucky bee, will be clipped by a policeman," Madame said inwardly, as the drawing-room door shut and the Slav's footsteps crossed the little ante-room. There was a murmur of voices, that of Straz raised as if in surprise or interrogation. Probably the gilt-buttoned functionary had been lying in wait for him with the hotel-bill. She listened a moment, heard no more, and went back, saying to her attendant:

"Pack everything. We leave at once for Brussels."

The maid said, with peculiar demureness:

"And Monsieur, Madame?"

Her mistress told her:

"Monsieur has gone to call upon his bankers."

The maid responded with even greater demureness:

"Madame should know that in her absence Monsieur endeavoured——"

Madame said hastily:

"Pay no heed. These are customs common in Roumania!"

The woman continued, bridling with all the scorn Lesbia's waiting-maid feels for the penniless gallant:

"Monsieur endeavoured to borrow of me ten thalers. . . ."

Madame shrugged and bade her:

"Go on with your packing! Monsieur does not accompany us!"

And without the exchange of another word the mistress and maid understood each other perfectly. The impecunious Straz was to be jettisoned for the lightening of the ship.

Meanwhile, Fate willed the Slav should encounter on the threshold of the ante-room the emissary of Messrs. Müller and Stettig, who had called for the third time to demand payment of the bill. This being offered for his inspection as the responsible male of the party, threw unexpected light on the intentions of Adelaide.

"'Sixteen hundred thalers,'" he murmured. "Reasonable, too—most reasonable! I have seen Madame wearing the ornament, and admired it very much. Yes, if you desire it, I will speak to the lady. It is doubtless mere forgetfulness that has deferred the settlement of your claim. Wait here!"

He unwound a knitted silk scarf that was folded round his bull-neck. He turned down the collar of his Astrakhan-lined coat, and went back with noiseless steps. The door

of the boudoir was ajar. He satisfied himself that Adelaide was in the bedroom beyond it. He stepped in, glanced about him, formulating his plan, then locked the boudoir-door, put the key in his pocket, crossed the room, and knocked upon the door of the bedroom, swiftly stepping aside, so that the door—which opened outwards,—should conceal him from those within.

"Who is it knocks? Open and see!" he heard Madame command her maid within the bedroom. The maid appeared, crossed the boudoir, found the door fast, and returned to tell her mistress. But then she found the door of the bedroom she had quitted was bolted on the other side. There was no sound within, but a kind of rustling, and once or twice a footstep on the carpet. So, with the patience of her caste, the maid sat down upon a sofa until it should please her lady to undo the bedroom-door.

Her lady was incommoded by the grip of Straz's thick hairy hands upon her windpipe. He freed one in a moment —and then Adelaide was being blinded by the folds of a silken scarf. . . . Long, wide, and elastic, it served the Roumanian's purpose admirably. Perhaps it had been useful in that particular way before. And as he rolled and twisted it, he whispered sniggeringly in the little pearl-white ear that jutted from between the crimson swathings, almost as though it had been purposely left free:

"So, my Sultana!—so,—you would betray me! . . ."

Enveloped, she stammered through the silken meshes some barely intelligible sentences. The folds tightened chokingly—and the words died in a gasp.

"Mercy! . . . Forgive! . . ."

"Surely, my proud Sultana," said the thickish voice with the catarrhal snuffle in it. "What will men not pardon to beauty such as yours!"

She moaned and strove to tear away the smooth bands that were suffocating her. He whipped a velvet ribbon

from the toilet-table, brought down her hands, and bound them behind her back. That little shell-shaped ear was purplish by this time. At the point of losing consciousness, she felt him softly groping for the treasure hidden in her bosom—she heard the crackling of the roll of notes withdrawn:

"*Do not . . .!*" she tried to say, but no sound came from her but a groaning; and through the roaring of her blood she heard him answer back:

"Do not rob you! would you plead, my peerless Adelaide? Far from it. I merely take from you what is my own! For—there was the taste of opium in my mouth when I awakened in Love's embraces. And conviction, stronger than proof, convinces me that I have been sold. Else why this store of honey in the breast of the Queen of the garden, while the black bee was sent roaming to gather store elsewhere? Eh, eh! I think I could manage to guess at the reason why I was to have been detained by those jewellers on suspicion of theft! My Sultana would have vanished, leaving no address behind her. . . . *Istenem!* but the emerald star would have served your purpose well!"

There was a silence. Rings of fire, stars of emerald, whirled before Adelaide's blinded vision.

"Do not be afraid, my Queen, I am not going to murder you!" chuckled the thick voice in the little swollen blackening ear. "Only to spoil your beauty a little—nothing more terrible. Your eyes will be less clear, your skin less dazzlingly unblemished, after this experience. You will never again look in your mirror without remembering me!"

Rocking and swaying, ready to fall, she was only kept upright by the arm of Straz about her body. She felt him free that arm, shifting her weight against his great chest, and as she lay blind and helpless there, his snigger vibrated

through her horribly. Then—the smooth, slippery folds of the silk scarf tightened murderously, stopping all breath, shutting out consciousness. Whelmed in an abyss of Nothingness, she felt and knew no more. . . .

"Madame is a little unwell," said Straz, who regained the ante-chamber by the way of a dressing-room communicating with Madame's bedroom. "She will call on Messrs. Müller and Stettig to-morrow, and settle their account. Meanwhile"—for the representative of the firm was beginning to expostulate—"she returns the emerald-pointed star with her regrets." He added smilingly as the relieved *employé* gratefully pocketed the trinket: "Ladies are not business-like in these little matters of money. But Heaven, who inspired in man the desire to see them well-dressed, has conferred on him the privilege of paying their bills."

He accompanied the jeweller's foreman down to the vestibule, chatting agreeably. He carried no valise, so was allowed to pass out with the man. Keeping one thick, hairy-backed hand thrust down into a pocket of his Astrakhan-furbished shooting-jacket, close-clutched upon the solid roll of Prussian bank-notes, reft from that smooth and perfumed hiding-place.

XXXI.

"The Crown Prince," wrote P. C. Breagh, "and the Red Prince—as people nickname Friedrich Karl of Prussia, in virtue of his partiality for the crimson uniform of his regiment, the Ziethen Hussars,—have departed amidst scenes of overwhelming enthusiasm, to take over the respective commands of the Third and Second Army Corps. On July 31st, at half-past-five noon, the very day on which I pen these lines, the aged Sovereign drove in an open landau

drawn by two superb black Hungarian horses to join his Ministers and his Chief of the Great Staff at the station, where waited the special train destined to convey the venerable Commander-in-Chief of the Field Armies of Germany to the immediate Seat of War."

There was a jolt, the pencil bucked furiously, and the writer's skull came smartly into contact with the uncushioned seat-back of the gray-painted, semi-partitioned railway transport-car, in which, with some forty blue-uniformed infantrymen of the Prussian Guard, P. C. Breagh was being hurried towards the Rhine frontier, in a din so comprehensive that you could only make your neighbour hear by putting your mouth to his ear and bawling, and in an atmosphere so thick with dust and smells, of varied degrees of intensity and picturesqueness, that you drew it into your lungs in gulps and exhaled it with sensible effort.

The partly-glazed windows did not let down, bars began where the glass left off, and therefore the N.C.O.'s of the eighth of a company, appropriated to themselves the corner-seats. Sandwiched between two large and heated warriors, with his unstrapped knapsack on his knee, and his elbows jammed immovably against his lower ribs, P. C. Breagh abandoned the impulse to rub his bump, and continued to write, using the old straw hat which crowned the knapsack, as a support for a notebook.

" The Queen," he went on, " who was evidently labouring under the influence of emotion, accompanied His Majesty. A thunderstorm coruscated and detonated overhead as the Royal salute of guns crashed out, and King Wilhelm's subjects greeted him with round upon round of enthusiastic '*Hoch's.*' The object of their acclamations kept continually smoothing his heavy white moustache with the right, ungloved hand, between the salutes with which he acknowledged the plaudits of his people—a characteristic gesture of the veteran monarch when . . ."

The pencil faltered. "Under the influence of emotion" could not be used again, because it had already done duty for the Queen, whose eyes, poor lady! had been red with crying. P. C. Breagh knocked off to sharpen his pencil and read over what he had set down. "Coruscated and detonated" pleased him, though to have said that the thunderstorm had growled and blazed would have been a good deal nearer the mark. And "characteristic gesture" was loftier language than "familiar trick" or "habit." Mr. Knewbit would have snorted at it, it was true, but this was not one of Mr. Knewbit's stipulated-for letters, "describing in a style readable by plain, ordinary, everyday people, what you've seen and heard, and felt, and smelt."

Still, one could not hope to please everybody—and this was a descriptive article—not a chatty news-letter. When complete, it would be forwarded to the Editor of a Leading Daily, with the brief intimation that more like it might be had—at a price. That it would draw commissions, P. C. Breagh believed implicitly. There was a stately stodginess about the style that could not fail to impress. So he continued as "*Die Wacht Am Rhein*" broke out once more; and the deep bass notes emitted by his burly right-hand neighbour tickled his ribs and made him goosefleshy.

"The aged monarch seemed weary, it appeared to me."

"*Ach, ach!* but the old man looks tired!" people in the front had holloaed to one another. All the week-end one had seen the King bowling up, and down, and round-about Berlin in his little one-horse carriage, with a single, mounted orderly-officer in attendance; giving out colours, addressing the regiments, conversing in short, soldierly sentences with the field-officers in command.

"Baron von Moltke, Chief of the Great General Staff," went on the pencil, "the War-Minister General von Roon, and the Federal Chancellor and Minister-President General Count von Bismarck-Schönhausen, with the *personnel* of

the Great Headquarters Staff and the mobilised Foreign Office, received His Majesty at the railway-station, tastefully adorned with black-and-white bunting, carpeted with red, and garlanded with roses, said to be the favourite floral emblem of the septuagenarian potentate. . . ."

It could not be denied by P. C. Breagh,—the painfully hammered-out paragraphs smacked of the sample supplied by Mr. Knewbit for avoidance. "Sham technicality and sentimental slumgullion," he seemed to hear that rigorous critic saying, so loudly and in such a pouncing manner, that P. C. Breagh hurriedly scratched out the sentence about the floral emblems, though "septuagenarian potentate" must be reserved for use later, as offering a refreshing change from "aged King" and "veteran" or "venerable monarch." "Hoary-headed Ruler" would come in usefully by-and-by. . . .

Bump—bump—jolt, ker-link-ker-lank ker-lunk! . . .

The two powerful engines, pulling a train-load of fully two-thirds of a regiment at fullest war-strength, were slowing up at a station: . . . A roar of voices kept continually at *crescendo* hailed the arrival. Another roar, mixed with fragments of patriotic song, replied. The platform presented a sea of heads of both sexes, backed by an imposing array of shelves, decorated with foliage, dangling lamps and national bunting; surmounted by a bust of the King between busts of Moltke and Bismarck, and literally groaning under piles of sausages, loaves, cheeses, oleaginous packages of sandwiches and pastry—rows of gilt and silver-foiled wine-bottles, and then more rows. . . .

Barrels of genuine Berlin beer, adorned with the Hohenzollern colours, stood hospitably ready to replenish glasses and mugs. Filled with the amber nectar, trays of these, suspended from the shoulders of stalwart youths, wearing Red Cross arm-badges; and white-muslin-draped maidens adorned with crimson sashes, waited to quench the thirst

of Prussia's soldier sons. And taking in the condition of things at a glance, said one of the two N.C.O.'s in charge of the party:

"*Himmeldonnerwetter!* . . . Lads, there seems no help for it. We have got to tuck in again!"

And simultaneously with the bass response: "At your service, *Herr* Sergeant!" and almost before the slow-going locomotives stopped, panting Samaritans hurled themselves upon the carriages, and arms ending in hands proffering packages of comestibles and tobacco, bottles of beer or frothing glasses, or packets of cigars; were thrust in between the window-bars, until every man's jaws were busy, and every man's hands were laden. . . . Until even the modestly-retiring P. C. Breagh had been compelled to accept a mighty hunk of iced plum-cake and a giant package of liver-sandwiches, and forced to empty a foaming beaker of brown Bavarian.

"Why not, why not, when they have plenty for everyone?" hiccupped a stalwart private, who had emptied many mugs: "Won't every fellow of the regiment find his double-pint waiting him, when the next train comes up?"

There was plenty for everyone. Not only the troop-train that would follow this, containing the odd thousand rank-and-file, and the rest of the regimental officers, would find the "cool blonde" and the "dark brunette," the savoury snack and the soothing weed, as ready for the alleviation of possible requirements as they had been met at every halting-place,—the City of Hanover severely excepted—since the huge send-off at Berlin on the afternoon of the previous day.

Every class contributed to the refreshment of the soldiers. Wealthy brewers sent drayloads of barrels, rich aristocrats gave wines from their cellars. The bakers

bestowed bread, the pork-butchers contributed hams and sausages, the tobacconists cigars and pipe-tobacco. While the cook baked cakes with her perquisites of lard and dripping; and the servant-maid took from her scant savings for the purchase of a gross of match-boxes, to distribute at the station when the military trains came in.

Poor was the wight who could be liberal in nothing. And thus thought the little old woman when she cooked her dozen ginger-snaps.

She was a tiny little monkey-faced old peasant, in a frilled white mutch, faded red shawl, blue apron and brown-striped drugget petticoat; and she stood quite alone in a clear space left upon the platform of a little country station, as the eager philanthropists about her crowded to lavish hospitality on the inmates of the incoming train. As the pastry and the cakes, the coffee, beer, and spirits flowed in at the windows and down the throats of the wearers of the blue, white-faced Guard uniforms, this little old woman made no effort to offer her ginger-snaps, which were ranged in three rows of four on a dingy white cloth in a little broken basket, and were palpably melting under the rays of an ardent July sun.

Her timidity, and her feebleness had kept her back, but when the Colonel in command issued the order to entrain, and the officers who had clanked in pairs up and down the platform, good-humouredly answering the questions of old ladies, and gallantly returning the admiring glances of young ones; accepting a leaf-full of fruit here, or a glass of Rhine wine or a cigarette there,—began to take their places,—she mustered courage to hold up her basket to a dandy young subaltern and murmur: "Please to take!"

Next moment—the dandy could not have meant it,—but as he pushed away the extended basket, and swung round upon his heel, his silver sword-knot caught in the

frayed cloth or broken wicker-work, and down went the basket, and the snaps were spilt upon the ground. . . .

"Thou dear God!" the little old woman cried in anguish. "*Ach—ach!* the good, the delicious ginger-snaps! . . . Who now will eat them? *Ach!—Ach!*"

And up to her poor eyes went her blue apron. It was a terrible tragedy to her. Some people pitied her. Others were heartless enough to laugh after the fashion of the blonde, red-lipped officer—and to laugh once more at the summary fashion of his setting-down.

For a terrible, rasping voice said, speaking behind the dandy subaltern, and full four inches above the level of his ear:

"Under-Lieutenant Fahle will remedy the damage done by his carelessness before he resumes his place in the train!"

Thus the train waited while the offender, blood-red with rage and confusion, picked up the sticky brown cakes with his snowily-gloved fingers, and replaced them in the broken basket, amidst the little old woman's humble apologies, and entreaties that the gracious gentleman would not trouble himself. When the Colonel, owner of the rasping voice above referred to, in conjunction with a bushy scarlet beard and bristling moustaches, a stately height of six feet four inches, a regulation waist, and three rows of decorations, performed an act of bravery for which he deserved another medal still. For, selecting the snap that looked cleanest, this dauntless warrior gravely took it between his thumb and finger, bit a piece out, and declared it excellent. Then, amidst the rapturous plaudits of the onlookers, he solemnly saluted the twittering old lady, and swung himself loftily back into his carriage, thundering out once more the order:

"Entrain!"

Conceive the banging of doors, the bumping and clanking, the cheers and the tears *da capo*, and the curtseys

the little old woman dropped, one after another, almost faster than one could count. Suppose the train moving slowly on, and a tricksy spirit inspiring a wag among the rank-and-file aboard, to shout to her:

"Hey there, Mother Ginger-snaps! give us one before we go!"

Twenty voices took up the cry, and blue cloth-covered arms were thrust out between the carriage window-bars. Hands waggled, soliciting the sugary boon. And the little old woman, torn between the desire to give and the impossibility of giving,—danced like a hen on a hot griddle, until a giant porter, compassionating her plight, snatched her up like a large doll, and ran with her beside the moving carriages, holding her out at arm's length, as she upheld her basket, until all the ginger-snaps were gone.

Instinctively as P. C. Breagh had felt that the cumbrous grandiloquence of his descriptive article would be snorted at by Mr. Knewbit, so he knew that the little incident of the ginger-snaps would afford his patron delight. Therefore he tucked it away in a safe pigeon-hole of his memory, with a description of the rough, gray-painted, crowded wooden box he sat in, odoriferous with its conglomeration of smells, based on the combined stenches of tallow and perspiring humanity, laced with the sharp sour of malt, and mercifully tempered with the fumes of strong tobacco.

Piff! The hot, cinder-flavoured draughts that raced in over the glazed half-windows were powerless to freshen or dilute the atmosphere. Yet amongst the varied types of men, who, their heavy knapsacks disposed in iron racks above them, sat packed as close as sardines on the narrow benches, were not a few, who, judging by the mute evidence of their well-groomed skins, and carefully-kept finger-nails, their finer hair and more clearly-modelled features, belonged to Germany's upper class.

Shriek! The train plunged into a cutting ending in a tunnel of sheer blackness. Bursting, with another shriek, into the light of day, she raced for a while neck-and-neck with a cavalry-train. They were Red Dragoon Guards and White Cuirassiers of the Great Headquarter Staff, and they exchanged cheers and sharp, staccato shouts of "*Hurrah, Preussen!*" with the infantry of the Guard, as the latter were hurried by.

Nothing was left to Chance. All was deadly, methodical accuracy. The keen, clear brain under Moltke's wig controlled the speed of every train upon the six Rhine and Moselle railways over which the Army of United Germany was rolling to inundate France.

Trains, trains, trains!

Trains of trucks, laden with gabions woven of split beech-saplings, with oaken fascines and bales of empty earth-bags. Commissariat trains of waggons packed with sheep and cattle, and the ubiquitous pig of the Fatherland. Coffee-and-sugar trains, trains of pea-sausage and the rock-hard brown biscuit wherewith "Our Moltke" fed his soldier men. Trains of spare arms, clothing, trenching-tools and cooking-utensils; trains of cartridges, gunpowder, blasting-powder, solid shot, shrapnel, and the big projectiles destined for the siege-guns; with trains upon trains close-packed with the men who were to use these things,—took precedence or gave it, because the withered finger beckoned or waved. . . .

"Our Moltke," so mild and affable and courteous, truly, when the Genius that possessed thee spread his steely wings and soared, thou wert a very terrible old man, or so it seems to me.

The descriptive article laid by, you found P. C. Breagh, in the interests of Mr. Knewbit, studying his fellow-travellers. The weak-eyed, spectacled young soldier on his

left-hand, whose fingers were burned and yellow-stained, as though their owner had dabbled in chemical experiments, and who had remained mute as a fish throughout the journey, only opening his mouth to eat or drink, or reply to a remark addressed to him by a non-commissioned officer, was reading the *Iliad* of Homer in the original, from a little parchment-bound, Amsterdam-printed, Elzevir edition, that he seemed to cherish as the apple of one of his short-sighted eyes. . . . A handsome young bugler in the next compartment, had a well-thumbed copy of "The Pickwick Papers." The huge tanned Guardsman on his right, whose broad breast displayed the medals of 1866 and of the Schleswig-Holstein campaign, and whose powerful bass notes had reverberated through the diaphragm of his neighbour when he sang, was chatting with a younger comrade who sat opposite. Holding the well-greased, unburnished needle-gun between their solid thighs —to hang the silver-spiked Guard's helmet on the muzzle seemed a popular way of disposing of the headpiece—they exchanged experiences in a genial roar, subdued to a growl at confidential passages.

"Grete came to the Barracks to bid me God-speed. . . . There were a few tears—dried when I promised to bring her a wedding-gift from Paris. Thou seest, she is going to turn over a new leaf, and get married to a waiter at a *Sommer-garten*—a club-footed man who is not called upon to serve—being on the Exempt List."

They guffawed at the picture of the happy bridegroom. Said the senior, wiping his overflowing eyes with a hand as brown and broad as an undersized flitch of bacon:

"I looked up 'Mina in the Landsberger-Strasse. She could not meet me, as her old woman had a betrothal-party for one of her daughters. A young student from a Conservatoire, in a tail-coat three sizes too small for him,

and a pair of linen cuffs as big as starched table-napkins, was the victim served up. I saw him as 'Mina carried in the spiced wine and rum-punch, and a longer pair of lantern-jaws I never saw. But when they sat down to table, and I took another peep through the door-crack, I promise you those jaws of his were grinding away like steam!"

"*Nu*, but the punch?" asked the other Guardsman.

"*Sapperlot!*—do you suppose I went without my whack of it?—and 'Mina's eyes as red as preserved cherries with crying about my going to the War? I had had a mug of the good stuff, and a bottle of something or other!—gilt paper on the neck of it—nothing at all but fizzle inside. Then I settled down to a jug of cool beer and the breast of a turkey, while 'Mina was waiting on the parlour-folks. Heard her step coming along the passage—thought I'd play the fool with her a bit—so I turned the kitchen-gas low and hid behind the door. In she comes!—I'd got my arms round her and kissed her—a regular juicy smack or two, before—by the yell she gave!—I knew it wasn't 'Mina at all. . . ."

"*Potzblitz!* who was it, then?"

"Who but the old woman? But for the thumping size of the waist I'd squeezed, and the taste of violet-powder in my mouth, I might have thought I'd got hold of one of the young Fräuleins. 'Help, murder, thieves!' cries she. 'How dare you insult a respectable mother of a family! Give your name, you rogue, or I'll have in the police!'—'Don't do that,' says I. 'I'm only 'Mina's brother—dropped in to take leave before going to the War!'—'A fine brother!' says she. 'Do brothers hug their sisters in that bearish way? Be off with you quick march! and think yourself lucky to escape so easily!' . . ." He wound up: "But if she had reported me to the *Herr Oberst-*

lieutenant, nothing much would have come of it. He'd have said: ' *Was soll Ich !*—but we're off to the War !' "

A sentence or so more, and the conversation resolved itself into strong tobacco-smoke. Twilight was fading into dusk. Dortmund—Elberfeld—Düsseldorf had paid tribute of beers, cheers, and tears to the defenders of German Unity, the most inveterate songsters and conversationalists were getting sleepy, and it would be midnight before the troop-train, travelling, like the others that followed it, at a speed strictly calculated to permit of the somewhat slower transit of six supplementary trains bearing the King and his Great Headquarter Staff—could reach Cologne.

The lamps, adding the flavour of hot kerosene to the conglomeration of odours—had been lighted at Düsseldorf. The tobacco-reek had grown so dense that below their band of yellow light was a sharply-defined band of opaque blue fog, in which medium colours were neutralised to monochrome, and outlines of sleeping, or chatting, or card-playing, or reading soldiers blurred into vagueness, wavered, and were blotted out for P. C. Breagh in a sudden doze.

He wakened at a late hour, to the iron measure clanked and ground and beaten out by couplings and brakes, wheels and axles. Snores of all kinds—from the shrill clarionet-note of the spectacled student of Homer to the deep 'cello-bass of the Guardsman who had hugged 'Mina's mistress in mistake for his sweetheart, resounded on all sides; the tobacco-fog had somewhat thinned.

Finding it possible to move, because his burly neighbour was soundly sleeping, pillowed upon the body of the man upon his right hand, P. C. Breagh yawned—recovered his knapsack, which had slipped from his knees to a floor which in point of cleanliness left much to be desired, removed from it with a fragment of newspaper the worst impurities it had contracted by contact, threw the newspaper out of

the nearest window, and in the performance of this act, caught a not unfriendly eye.

Its owner, a huge young man, who, occupying a place on the end of the same seat, had been hitherto screened by the body of the huger private who had kissed not wisely, said, and in English of the Oxford brand:

"You find our men lacking in good manners? Yet there is much spitting on the part of English soldiers, when they are standing at ease, or off duty. I have myself observed this."

"Then you know England?" P. C. Breagh interrogated, and the private, who was very tall, very blonde, very broad-shouldered, straight-featured, blue-eyed, and small-waisted, answered:

"Pretty well. I have a relative who married a lady who is your countrywoman. I have been the guest of her family at their London house. You speak our language, for I have heard you. And with a North Prussian accent, by the way."

P. C. Breagh returned:

"I spent three years at Schwärz-Brettingen. With the sole result that I can make myself understood by Germans who don't speak English. And that I owe to my landlady."

Said the Guardsman, yawning and smiling:

"My father sent me to Oxford. Three terms have yielded this result,—that I can converse with Englishmen who know German. Thanks to a charming young lady, a niece of the relative I spoke of just now, who was so good as to read the poems of Tennyson with me. '*The Princess*,' '*In Memoriam*,' and '*Maud*,' were her chief favourites—I preferred his epics founded on the Arthurian legend. Though my charming English cousin was often vexed with me for saying that our Wagner's verse-drama of the *Nibelungen-Ring* possessed far truer inspiration, and that

Die Walkure and *Tristan* would have been finer than anything Tennyson has ever written,—had they existed simply as poems, and never been wedded to music at all. At that the young English lady was angry; she said things to me in her indignation which were terrible; but she forgave me, because I was compelled to leave the University and return to Germany to put in my term of service as a private, before I present myself as a candidate for an officer's silver sword-knot in the usual course of things. You are, perhaps, acquainted with our German methods of qualifying for a Commission? Bismarck has two sons serving as troopers with the 1st Dragoon Guards; whereas a private of Ours is a nephew of Moltke's, and two or three others are cadets of princely families—representatives of what your countrymen would call the 'aristocracy of Germany.' Perhaps one or two of them will find that silver sword-knot they are looking for—across the frontier, somewhere between the Rhine and the Moselle! . . ."

"When do you think there will be fighting?"

Inexpressibly P. C. Breagh yearned to know when and where the dance was expected to begin. But his eagerness seemed to freeze the loquacious Guardsman, whose blue eyes narrowed, whose smile stiffened, whose smooth voice instantly diverted the current of the talk to other things:

"Were you at the Gala Performance at the Opera, the night before last? Delphine Zucca could hardly sing; her husband, young Baron von Bladen, of the Jästrow Hussars, has been appointed first galloper on the Staff of General Manteuffel, Chief of the First Corps First Army. So the Zucca is naturally inconsolable, as they've only been married a month. But Elise Hahn-Tieck, as the Genius of United Germany, in a corslet of gilt chain-mail, and a helmet crested with oak-boughs, with a green Rhine meandering over her white muslin robe, was tremendous when she came down to the centre of the stage to sing '*Die*

Wacht Am Rhein,'—carrying our East Prussian Flag and the banner of the Hohenzollern, and followed by other operatic actresses in character as the Auxiliary States. *Sapperlot!* When she drew her sword, she was tremendous! And when she fell upon her knees, the big chandelier in the auditorium jumped. She sang the part of *Gretchen* last season, and looked not much over thirty. Make-up, because, you know, she has a grandson who is a junior-lieutenant in the Duke of Coburg's Regiment of White Cuirassiers, and must be sixty if she's a day. *Prime donne* are like wines, no good till they've arrived at a ripe old age. Though I could introduce you to a little girl of eighteen or so, just now doing a song-and-dance at the Schützen-Strasse Tingel-Tangel, who has a voice that pleases me better than the warblings of any of the highly-paid Opera House nightingales. And what a figure! round and tempting and seductive. And such arms, and—*Sapperlot!*—what a pair of legs!"

Thus prattled the twenty-year-old sprig of German aristocracy, to the other youngster, his senior in years if his junior in knowledge of the world. He went on in his Oxford English:

"Not that I'm inclined to ruin myself for women, though I must say a good many pretty ones have been uncommonly kind to me. That sort of thing runs in my family, though! and I ought to be obliged to my Cousin Max for dying a bachelor. Killed himself in '66 about a mistress who was playing the double game. A regular French adventuress, diabolically handsome, who eloped with him when he was *attaché* of our Prussian Embassy at Paris in '56, and has a husband living, they say. Colossal impudence—actually passes herself off as my cousin's widow, in society of a certain sort. So, out of the desire to deal Madame Venus a slap in the face, I got a comrade who knew her, to introduce me at a festive supper-party. . . . Said he: 'Countess von Schön-Valverden, permit me to present my most

intimate friend,' and reels off my name. Would you believe it, the woman never turned a hair. It was I who got flustered when she stared me in the face. Colossal coolness!—I can hear her now, lisping: '*The Herr Count is doubtless a relative of my poor, dear Maximilian! Even had he not borne the name, I should have been struck by his resemblance to my beloved lost one.*' And then I got out, not half as cleverly as I had planned it: 'And even had you borne the name that is your own, Madame, I should have been shot through the heart by the beauty that has already proved fatal to one member of my family!' " He added, " I laid an emphasis on those four words, '*shot through the heart*' because my unlucky cousin actually met his death after that fashion. . . . Will you have a cigar of mine? They are better than the weeds our patriotic friends have bestowed on us."

P. C. Breagh accepted a smooth, light-hued Havana from the offered case, asking with interest, due to the lurid flare of tragedy in the background of the other's lively chatter: " And the lady of the Venusberg—how did she take your reference to her past?"

The Guardsman, cigar in mouth, stopped in the act of striking a fusee-match to answer: " She took it—as a woman of Madame de Bayard's stamp might be expected to. With a *sangfroid* that one could only admire somewhat less than her superb skin and hair, her shape of a goddess and her marvellous eyes—almost the colour of Brazilian tourmaline." He sent out a spiral of fragrant brownish-blue smoke and added: " Had I actually stood four years ago in the shoes which I have legally inherited, I'll be hanged if I'd have shot myself and left her to my rival. For the other was at Schönfeld—actually in the house, you must know!—when Cousin Max came home on leave. Hence the tragedy at three o'clock in the morning. Such a depressing hour to commit suicide. Now, had it been after supper . . ."

He shrugged, and sent out another spiral of cigar-smoke, and perceiving that his whilom listener heard no longer, ceased to talk.

The while P. C. Breagh plunged into a brown-study by the chance utterance of a stranger's name, and unblushingly abandoning the effort to remain true to his gigantic type-ideal, hung fondly over the mentally evoked image of an Infanta in miniature.

Where was Juliette de Bayard now ? Had the outbreak of war hastened or delayed her marriage with the happy master of swordsmanship ? And—worshipping her father as Monica had said she did—how had she borne the parting from him ?

She would be very calm. . . . P. C. Breagh pictured the little face drawn and pinched with misery; saw the sapphire eyes dimmed with tears unshed, imagined the slender throat convulsed with sobs that were kept resolutely back, heard the silver-flute voice saying:

" My father has honoured me with his confidence as long as I can remember, sir !" and, " See you—I will be trusted absolutely, or I will not be trusted at all !"

Strange that his elfin queen—his carved ivory Princess—should bear the same name as the woman the Guardsman had gossiped of—the beautiful, evil creature with the eyes like Brazilian tourmalines. And, what particular colour in Brazilian tourmalines might have been intended ? Some were purple, others pink, yet others reddish-brown. The woman who had dropped her parasol on the staircase at the Chancellor's had had eyes of tawny wine-colour. With the remembrance, came back the perfume shaken from her rustling silks and laces, and the languid echo of her caressing voice.

Drowsiness came next, and then oblivion, in heavy slumber. And, as the unconscious form of P. C. Breagh

lapsed this way and that, and his chin burrowed deeper into his bosom, the Sergeant who occupied the corner-seat facing the sleeper,—shading his eyes from the lamplight with a broad left, brown hand that wore a thick silver wedding ring upon the little finger, lowered the hand, and leaning forwards, stared in the young man's unconscious face, with small, suspicious, unwinking eyes. Now the eyes looked round so sharply, that every waking man in the compartment, save the blue-eyed patron of the Tingel-Tangel girl, found it necessary to assume the appearance of slumber, and the Sergeant's voice said hoarsely:

"Private von Valverden!"

"At your service, *Herr* Sergeant."

"Private von Valverden, is this one, then, an Englishman?"

"Undoubtedly, *Herr* Sergeant!"

"*Gut!*" said the Sergeant. "But what is his calling? Is he of the newspaper-offices that he sits and scribbles so?"

"That question I cannot answer, *Herr* Sergeant, but if he be on the staff of any paper, he cannot accompany us without a *Legitimation,* and a letter from someone in authority."

The Sergeant sucked in his bearded lips, and rolled his sharp little eyes more suspiciously than ever. Valverden went on:

"Doubtless he has them—I saw him show a paper to the Halt Commandant at Berlin, and the *Herr* Colonel himself spoke to him and told him he might travel as far as Bingen by this train. And I happen to know that four London newspaper correspondents have been accredited by the King upon the instance of Count Bismarck; one being appointed to accompany the Crown Prince, another being permitted to accompany the Second Army, while two are attached to the Great Headquarter Staff."

The Sergeant said, glancing at the unconscious slumberer:

"*Gut, gut!* but is this fellow one of them?"

"If he be not, *Herr* Sergeant, he will get no farther than Bingen, for doubtless the Commandant there will be on the look-out for persons whose credentials are not of the best."

The Sergeant shook his head vigorously, wrinkling up his full-bearded countenance suspiciously:

"And suppose the Commandant is not on the look-out, Private von Valverden? See you, I have had my suspicions since yesterday, and I tell you . . ."

XXXII.

Every waking ear in the neighbourhood, and there were now a good many, pricked with curiosity as the Sergeant half-rose, and, inclining his inflamed countenance and bearded lips towards the ear of his selected confidant, continued in a hoarse rumbling undertone:

"Two of those *verdammte* English newspaper-scribblers that have got on the blind side of Their Excellencies and His Majesty the Commander-in-Chief, were at the station at Berlin picking up information the very day we entrained. Well do I know that paunchy little one with the big beard, who has, they say, as many Orders as a Field-Marshal, and who will venture to thrust himself upon Our Moltke in his study, and accost His Excellency Count Bismarck upon the very doorsteps of the Reichstag itself. They got off three trains ahead of us, paying for men and horses and trucks, to Cologne; and if this fellow were not a knave, would he not have gone with them? *Ach, ja!* It would have been so! But they did not even know him, though he pretended to touch his cap to them. . . . I tell you he turned as red as beetroot when they passed him without a glance. *Nu, nu!* he is an unlicensed meddler, if not a French spy, speaking English. Do they not teach

it at their Lycées? And he has got on the blind side of the Commandant at Berlin and the *Herr* Colonel. But I, Sergeant Schmidt, have my weather-eye open, and it sticks in my gizzard that our so-glorious Moltke, let alone His Majesty, should with so much civility these quill-driving vagabonds encourage: when they say the French Emperor has given orders that, should the like of them about the heels of his Army Corps be caught sniffing, they are to be shot."

"Possibly the Napoleon has more deficiencies to be ashamed of, than we have, *Herr* Sergeant!"

Taking a deep breath, the Sergeant blew himself out to the utmost of his capacity and bellowed:

"*Himmeldonnerwetter!* are you going to insinuate in my presence that the Prussian Army has anything at all to be ashamed of? Now you've waked this rascal with your racket, maybe you'll sit on his head while I go through his pockets. Here, Braun and Kleiss, catch hold of his arms and legs!"

Waking in the chiaroscuro of the smoke-filled, lamplit, troop-carriage to find himself in the brawny grip of the aforesaid Braun and Kleiss, P. C. Breagh fought for freedom, yelling as one possessed, and lashing out with all his might. In the heat of the scrimmage that followed, as a muscular arm in a coarse blue sleeve came round his neck from behind and choked him into silence, somebody said in his ear:

"*Keep still . . . not hurt you! Only going . . . search!*"

And before he had rallied his wits sufficiently to realise that the warning was in English, a pair of extra-sized hands had deftly emptied the pockets of the old brown Norfolk jacket, relieved him of the cherished binoculars, a brand-new revolver, and a purse and letter-case that had been hidden in his bosom next the skin. Then, a soiled newspaper having been spread upon the carriage-

bench and the pieces of conviction arranged upon it, Sergeant Schmidt, surrounded by an audience of admiring inferiors, commenced to interrogate their owner:

"What is this?" He held up the well-used briar-root. "A pipe, and yet it might be used to conceal despatches or tracings. A pistol also. On the principle of the French *mitraille*, with many barrels. Prisoner, answer! Where did you get this?"

Returned P. C. Breagh, scarlet and breathing shortly:

"I bought it in Berlin from a pawnbroker in the Landsberger-strasse. By what right . . ."

Someone behind hacked him on the ankle, driving home the axiom that silence was wisdom, and he subsided, boiling within, as the Colt, a nearly brand-new six-barrelled weapon, seen and purchased, together with its box of three hundred cartridges, for seven of P. C. Breagh's cherished sovereigns, was laid by, while the Sergeant, breathing stertorously, examined the contents of the purse. He snorted, letting the bright coins run through his greedy fingers like yellow water:

"Nine pieces of gold. French coins, too, or call me a sheepshead!"

"At your service, *Herr* Sergeant," put in the smooth, well-bred voice of Valverden, following on the ominous murmur that had greeted the Sergeant's announcement; "the money is as English as this revolver is American. Prove the first for yourself. When has the French Emperor figured in a woman's hair and *corsage?*"

A guffaw went up. P. C. Breagh, recognising the voice which had spoken from behind him, realised that here was a friend in need. But an attempt at speech on his part was frustrated by an ominous tightening of the muscular arm that had previously half-strangled him. The Sergeant, his fiery pot-zeal rather damped by frequent set-backs, snapped-to the purse and said, keeping it tucked in one

capacious palm, as he shook out the contents of the letter-case:

"*So!* He is cunning, like many another of his kidney. Yet it may be here is proof sufficient to show him a rogue! Who here reads French?"

"I do, *Herr* Sergeant." Once again the well-bred voice of Valverden. The Sergeant grunted surlily:

"There is another here . . . Private Kunz!"

The spectacled soldier who read Homer in the original, and who had been violently displaced when the muscular Braun and the athletic Kleiss had obeyed the order to pinion the suspected one, shot bolt upright in his distant corner, saluted and said in a meek voice:

"At your service, *Herr* Sergeant!"

"Private Kunz, canst thou read French?"

"*Zu befehl, Herr* Sergeant!" The spectacled private added as the Sergeant passed him over the contents of the letter-case: "But these letters are not in French. Two are in English, and one is in German."

The Sergeant scowled and thundered:

"Thou art an ass!"

"At your service, *Herr* Sergeant," mildly agreed the spectacled soldier, "but Private Count von Schön-Valverden, who understands the French and English languages, will corroborate my statement if you will kindly refer to him."

"'Kindly refer.' . . . 'Corroborate my statement.' . . ." The Sergeant, purple in the gills, and with bolting eyes, loosened his collar-hook before he launched into profanity: "*Potzblitz!* Never did I meet with language to equal thine. What wert thou as a civilian before thou didst enter the Army?"

"Graduate of the University of Würzburg, *Herr* Sergeant," faltered the spectacled Guardsman, "and *Privatdocent* in Chemistry and Philosophy. Occupying the post

of assistant to Herr Weber, Dispensing Chemist, of Strahlsund, near Stettin."

"*Sehrgut*, Private Kunz," said the Sergeant, conscious of the grins lurking behind the respectful faces about him. "Tell us plainly, and without lying or skipping, what are these papers the fellow had got on him ? Put him back on the seat, Braun and Kleiss, and sit on either side, each taking a wing. Now, Kunz, do thou begin !"

And the little sheaf that had been transferred from the horny clutches of the Sergeant to the yellow-stained, sensitive-looking fingers of the chemist's assistant, was subjected to the scrutiny of the weak eyes behind his large round spectacles, as sleepy-looking Westphalian villages of cottages with tall tiled roofs, grouped about squat, low-spired churches; and leagues of rye and barley, almost ready for the sickle, streamed by the half-glazed windows, all black in shadow and white in the clear, pure radiance of August's crescent moon.

Item, a worn letter in English handwriting of the legal kind, dated in the January previous, and directed to P. C. Breagh, Esq., Care of Frau Busch, Jaeger-strasse, Schwärz-Brettingen. *Item*, a passport issued some ten days previously, to the same person on application at the London Foreign Office, on disbursement of the sum of Two Shillings, and authorising him, on payment of the proper dues and at his own risk, to proceed via Ostend to Berlin. *Item*, another passport, procured as a last resource—granting the said P. C. Breagh permission on the part of the Berlin Foreign Office, and as a strictly non-combatant British subject, to transfer himself, *via* Belgium and Luxembourg, to French territory. Lastly a half-sheet of tough Chancellory note-paper, covered with the large, closely-set, vigorous handwriting of the man who was meant when newspaper-editors and politicians, diplomats and monarchs, guttersnipes and generals, talked of Prussia.

What would happen when that came under the spectacles of the ex-chemist's assistant? P. C. Breagh thirsted to know.

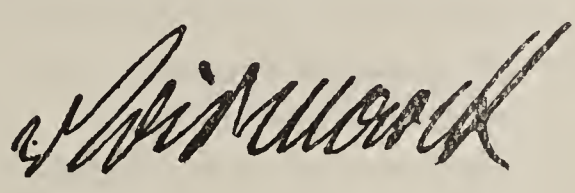
What happened was, that the Sergeant, rendered impatient by delay on the part of the spectacled one, grabbed at the documents and dropped them on the unclean floor. The half-sheet of Chancellory note was picked up by Valverden. He gave it one glance and said, smoothly and with an indefinable change in the tone of the voice that P. C. Breagh had thought so friendly:

"I would put this paper back with the rest and return them to their owner, *Herr* Sergeant, and prosecute no further inquiries, if I were you."

"*Nu?* . . . *Was?* I cannot read the crabbed stuff that is written and printed on the other papers," grunted the Sergeant. "But this seems wholesome German. . . . What says it, then? Tell us, you, since that *gimpel* in glasses can make nothing of it, for all his brag."

Valverden obeyed and read:

"*The bearer of this is an Englishman, named Patrick Carolan Breagh, speaking German with a slight accent. Height five feet nine inches, age* 23. *Hair reddish and curling, complexion fresh, much freckled. Short, straight nose, gray eyes with dots of yellow, chin square, slightly cleft. Further his desire to proceed with our troops, if possible. I can personally vouch for his honesty and good faith.*



"Berlin,
"*July,* 1870."

XXXIII.

P. C. Breagh never heard the order given, but next moment his aching wrists were released from the huge, hard grip of Privates Braun and Kleiss, and the muscular legs that had affectionately twined about his own, were withdrawn. Subsequently, singly, and in silence, the Sergeant handed back the watch, pipe, tobacco-pouch, purse, and note-case. Last of all, Valverden, making a long arm, returned the half-sheet of Chancellory note, bearing the signature that had worked the miracle, without words, and looking coldly in its owner's face.

"Thanks tremendously! . . . I've no doubt I'm to blame for not producing my credentials earlier," said Carolan. "But I'd no notion of the rather serious turn things were going to take. However, all's well that ends——"

His smile froze upon his lips, and died out of his eyes as he encountered the stare the other turned upon him, answering haughtily:

"I regret that you have suffered some rough handling from my comrades, under the wrong impression that you were an agent of the French Secret Service. Admitting that our own side act advisedly in employing persons like you, I must say that to me, personally, a spy is—a spy!"

"But, hang it! you don't suppose——" Carolan choked out after a moment of angry bewilderment. And with the Sergeant's piggish little eyes curiously fixed on him, Valverden answered curtly:

"I suppose nothing. Excuse me from further conversation."

The revolver, with its cartridges, had not been returned with the other articles. Its owner asked the Sergeant for it, getting in reply only a glare.

Thenceforwards, the long night's journey, for one traveller, was performed in unbroken silence. P. C. Breagh had been despatched to Coventry by one and all.

Men who conversed spoke in barely-audible whispers, their covert glances, like the frigid indifference of Valverden's regard, and the extra six inches of seat-space accorded to the holder of the States' Chancellor's written guarantee, testified to the aroma of suspicion that personage's document exhaled.

So at breathless, baking midnight the troop-train clanked into Cologne, no longer throbbing with the beat of drums, roaring with iron-shod wheels, swarming with men in brass-spiked helmets, choked with continuously shouting patriots, as it had been a few hours earlier when the Headquarter Staff trains had passed through,—and in the close, gray dawn of a thundery day, jolted into Bingen.

Here miles of rolling-stock and numberless engines blocked up the metal roads. Shuttered windows and barricaded doors testified that house-owners had temporarily abandoned their property. Strings of barges, laden with Commissariat stores and live-stock, were being towed up the Rhine by the gaily painted, white-awninged, paddle-wheel steamers familiar to the British tourist, while others were conveying voluntarily-exiled residents and fugitive visitors down the classic stream out of harm's way.

Conveyance by railway—of a kind—was to be had upon terms prohibitory to all but the opulent. And dishevelled ladies, pale or red with panic, besieged the station-master and his master, the Halt Commandant—with prayers, commands and entreaties, for places, but for places on some Northward-going train. . . .

Something was in the air besides the short, staccato bugle-calls, the scream of signal-whistles and the ceaseless beating of the Prussian side-drums. P. C. Breagh knew it,

even as a tall, lean, red-faced Inspector caught his eye and beckoned him imperiously to quit his cage, asking:

"You have a *Legitimation* to proceed with the troops to Kreuznach? No? Then be good enough to stand aside until I have an opportunity of ascertaining why you were originally permitted. Here is the Commandant."

Standing on the whitewashed platform, hot, dusty, unbrushed and unwashed, burdened with his unstrapped knapsack, a stout walking-stick, a leather-covered, screw topped sling water-bottle, some crumpled newspapers and a package of solid sandwiches—thrust upon him at one of the previous stopping-places, P. C. Breagh was conscious of cutting a sorry figure. Conscious, too, of Valverden's supercilious eye-glass, glittering a few yards off, as he stretched his long legs on the platform and talked eagerly with some comrades of his own standing, straight-backed, long-legged youngsters, with arrogant manners, clear eyes, budding moustaches, newly-fledged whiskers, broad shoulders and regulation waists.

No new pupil at a young ladies' boarding school, smarting under the double stigma of plainness and poverty, no cheaply-arrayed *débutante* at a suburban subscription-ball, ever blushed more hotly or winced more painfully under the scrutiny of prettier and richer girls, than did P. C. Breagh under the glances of these young men.

Not the memory of the Army Service examinations he had failed in galled him, or that missed shot for the I.C.S., or the University career foregone. It was the word "spy" that rankled in his memory and took the starch out of his self-conceit.

Before the discovery of the Minister's written guarantee, Valverden had gossiped with him as an equal—the other Guardsmen had been friendly in their rougher way. The fateful half-sheet of Chancellory note had changed everything. "As though one had blossomed out in plague or small-pox," P. C. Breagh had said to himself bitterly.

"And I feel like a kind of Ali Baba or somebody, whose talisman would only work upside down !"

Even his parting salute had met with grudging acknowledgment. The Sergeant had grunted. Braun and Kleiss had spat, and looked the other way. Valverden's finger had barely brushed the narrow peak of his forage-cap. Only Kunz, the spectacled ex-chemist's assistant, had civilly bidden the parting guest good-day.

He was horribly sore at the treatment received from Valverden. Susceptible of hero-worship, warm and sincere in feeling, he had taken a liking to the brilliant youngster, three years his junior, his superior in social status and in cynical knowledge of the world. Was it disgraceful to belong to the Prussian Diplomatic Secret Intelligence Department, that ramifying spider-web of invisible wires, reaching to the uttermost Kingdoms of the civilised globe, and emanating from the Chancellory in the Friedrich-strasse, Berlin ?

The Army had its secret agents, an army of them, by Jingo ! Had not scraps of conversation reached the ears of P. C. Breagh no later than the previous day, relative to a certain dandy Colonel of Prussian Field Artillery, who for the past two years had filled the well-paid post of lace and ribbon Department Manager at the Paris Bon Marché.

Then why on earth . . . But at this juncture the Halt Inspector returned with the Commandant, a white-whiskered, potty officer, in blue infantry uniform with distinctive white shoulder-straps, beside whom stalked a tall, middle-aged Colonel of Uhlans, whose pale eyes, unshaded by the tufted schapka, glittered through steel-rimmed glasses, whose teeth were clenched on a familiar meerschaum—and whose gaunt, broad-shouldered figure looked better in the dark blue cavalry uniform with its yellow plastron and white cross-belt, than in Herr von Rosius's Berlin-made private clothes.

For it was undoubtedly Miss Ling's quiet-mannered first-

floor lodger, who had resigned his post of teacher at the Berners Street Institute of Languages when the wire had come from Headquarters, bidding him come back and be a cog-wheel in Moltke's big war-machine. What Mr. Knewbit would have called "the blank expression" appeared behind his spectacles when they showed him his young fellow-lodger from Coram Street. But he paused when the Commandant halted and began to ask questions—which Carolan answered in the German so frequently tested on Herr von Rosius.

"How came you to travel from Berlin in a train set apart for the use of the Guard Infantry? Show me your *Legitimations-Kart* and military ticket, if you have one!—You have neither? . . . Then how did you, against the regulations, obtain permission of the authorities to enter a *militär-zug?* It is inconceivable that you should have managed to conceal yourself without connivance of some kind!"

Things were getting close to the Chancellory half-sheet, but it would never be displayed with the consent of P. C. Breagh. He had wild ideas of feigning idiocy, of appealing to von Rosius, but the first resource savoured of the theatre too strongly for adoption, and the second—one glance at the hard, ignoring eyes behind the steel-rimmed glasses disposed of that for good.

At his wits' end, a loud, genial voice hailed him in the English language, flavoured with the County Dublin brogue.

"By the powers! and there's the face I'm looking for. Longer by a yard than it was when you capped me at Berlin. Faith! and I stared at you with all my eyes, wondering where in the world I'd last beheld ye? Till Chris Brotherton quizzed me and I bet him five shillings the place was Fleet Street. Now, on your honour, was it? Speak, or for ever after hold your tongue!"

"Not quite Fleet Street, sir, but hardly a stone's throw

from it!" A great wave of unreasonable hope lifted the sinking heart of P. C. Breagh.

The big, warm voice and the kind, bright glance that had wrought the miracle, belonged to a stout little bearded gentleman of fifty, topped with a hard gray Derby, and attired in a pepper-and-salt cutaway coat, brown holland vest and neat white hunting-stock, gray Bedford cords and shiny black spurred Blucher boots. Had you met him cantering on some plump and well-fed cob along a green lane in the Mother Country, you would have taken him—but for the revolver-pouch that depended from a neat black leather belt, and the wallet that with its companioning field-glass, was slung across his shoulders—for a hard-riding country surgeon or solicitor, of the good old English kind. But P. C. Breagh knew better, and his drab world changed to rose-colour, as the big voice rolled from the capacious chest:

"Hardly a minute's . . . Hold on! For the life of you don't refresh me memory! What would it be to find one's mental legs getting shaky at the start of a new campaign! Not a stone's throw from Fleet Street, did you say? . . . By the Beadle of Old Trinity! if you don't mean the Maze at Hampton Court or the Nevski Prospect at Petersburg, or the garden of the Dilkusha at Lucknow, you're talking of Printing House Square! Am I right now?"

"You've hit the nail, sir! You were walking arm-in-arm with Mr. Sala—and I'd been introduced to him before, luckily! and he remembered my name and presented me to you!"

"And I'm five shillings the richer by the meeting. For if Chris Brotherton dares to say *The Thunderbolt* office and Fleet Street are anything but synonymous, he's a bolder man than I take him to be. But I'm interrupting a conversation. . . ." He broke off, saluting the official. "Pray accept my apologies, *Herr* Commandant, I'll wait while you finish with my young friend."

The Commandant stiffly returned the genial salute before he wheeled and walked off with the Inspector and von Rosius. Who, while the king of British War Correspondents chatted with his glowing vassal, had exchanged a few sentences with these personages apart. Then said the kindly little gentleman, with a humorous twirl of the eye at the three:

"I claimed your acquaintance because I saw you nearing the jaws of a German guardroom. Though I fancy you'd a friend at Court in that Uhlan Colonel there! . . . I heard him tell the Commandant that he'd no earthly idea how you got here, but that you were simply an English schoolboy who was crazy to see a war. And the Commandant said something about turning tail at the first whistle of a *Bombensplitter*—that's a shell-splinter. Though I'm pretty certain by the cut of your jib you'd do nothing of the kind!"

He added, as a familiar shout of "Entrain!" and a bugle-call brought the platform leg-stretchers scampering to their places and the long train of gray-painted waggons, officers' horse-boxes and baggage trucks, clanked into motion again:

"Your friends of the Guard have gone without you. Kreuznach will be their detraining-point—that's all I can tell you. For the reason—and it's an uncommonly sound one!—that the newly-mobilised men of the infantry battalions want a march to limber their joints and stretch their new boots a bit. Begad! my own brogues would be the better of a day or two on the trees. But rheumatism and corns are the price one pays for experience—and the privilege of talking like a daddy to harum-scarum gossoons like yourself. You've no business to be here, boyo! but since you are—use your eyes and brains to observe with—never be ashamed of running away when you can get out of danger by doing it! and for your mother's sake, if she's living—don't be dragged into fighting on a side. Forget that you have a revolver, if that bulge under your jacket means that you carry one,—and keep your temper cool and

your opinions strictly neutral, if a fellow with a drop of Irish blood in him *can!* Twit me with Bull Run, now, and you'll get the historic answer: 'Do as I advise you to do, not what I do!' "

He pulled out the battered gold hunting-watch at the end of its short, strong leather guard, and glanced at it, saying with a sigh of relief:

"Seven o'clock. Breakfast ought to be ready at the Victoria—barrack of a hostelry, packed with cocky Prussian officers. Suppose you come back there with me and have a bite and sup?"

Dazzling prospect! to a young man given to hero-worship, which the historian of "Cromwell" had positively asserted to be good for youthful bodies and souls. P. C. Breagh would have given a great deal if Valverden could have heard the invitation. . . . However, it was more likely than not that he had beheld the object of his scorn in familiar conversation with the most famous of British War Correspondents, as the gray-painted troop-train carried him away.

XXXIV.

THAT was an enchanted walk for P. C. Breagh, back to the big, bare, barrack-like Victoria. It was the Doctor's generous amends for an unintentional slight. Two days previously, at the Potsdam Railway Station, Berlin, when a companion had said to him: "Who's the enthusiastic young admirer who kotowed to you? English, I should say, and you cut him unmercifully,"—he had answered, out of the whirl of great affairs:

"I've no notion; but I'll make amends if ever he crosses my path again. It's not my way to hurt a boy."

"Bet you five bob he hails from Fleet Street," the friend had cried; and the Doctor had answered:

"If so, he has a claim on me I'm not going to deny."

Dust underfoot made the tread fall as on velvet. Dust in the air parched the throat and got in the eyes. And the incessant rolling of the Prussian side-drums, lanced through with signal whistles and sharp bugle-calls, made the hot baked atmosphere quiver, and the play of early sunshine on myriads of brass helmet-spikes made the eyes water and blink, as the battalions of blue infantry that had marched into Bingen on the previous day mustered from their billets, were entrained and conjured away; and other battalions that had marched fifteen miles since cockcrow tramped in with the thick white dust turned to mud upon them by the heavy Rhineland dews that had soaked their boots and damped their uniforms, halted but to breakfast—and were off, almost on the heels of the first.

Division after Division of Cavalry—Uhlans in light or dark blue piped with red, and shiny black Lancer schapkas, Cuirassiers in white uniforms, with steel breast and back plates, and steel helmets simple in design as those of Cromwell's Ironsides. Light blue Dragoons, Hussars with tufted shakos of miniver, and braided jackets of red, black, green, brown and pale blue, with their flying batteries of Horse Artillery, their proviant columns and ammunition-trains had been rushed to the frontier with astounding speed. Now the blue deluge of marching men with needle-guns came rolling after. With thunder of heavy siege-trains, with patches of green upon the monotonous blue, that stood for picked battalions of sharpshooters; sons of gamekeepers and forest-rangers; bred from childhood to woodcraft and hunter's lore; experts in the use of the rifle, scouts and trackers of daring and skill.

On the seventeenth of July the Warlock had said to his King, " Give me to the third of August and we are safe." This was the third of August. And the air was thick with something besides dust.

Conscious of this, they talked, the neophyte and the

adept discussing things that had happened during the pregnant interval. How Forbes of *The Daily News*, who tramped it up to Saarbrück by the Nahe Valley Road from Kreuznach, had seen the first blood flow, when a couple of infantrymen of the garrison were brought in in a chipped condition, having been sniped at by red-breeched French marksmen across the frontier-line.

With a single battalion of the Hohenzollerns, the 7th Regiment of Rhineland Uhlans had hitherto constituted Saarbrück's garrison. And the French being reported in force at Forbach, some fifteen or sixteen thousand men being said to be strung out along the frontier, a detachment of Uhlans with spare troop-horses had ridden into Neunkirchen on the morning of the twenty-fourth of July, and borrowed from the collieries a dozen stout miners, armed with picks, and supplied with blasting-cartridges, fuses, and so on. These grimy stalwarts they tied on troop-horses; crossed the frontier, blew up the viaduct on the railway-line branching from the Forbach-Metz railway near Cocheren, and connecting Metz with Saarguemines, Bitche, Hagenau and Strasbourg.

Thenceafter, nothing of note happened until the twenty-eighth of July, when the Emperor Napoleon III. entered Metz with his Staff and the heir to the Throne Imperial, and formally took command of the seven *corps d'armée* known as the "Army of the Rhine." Upon the same day, a party of the Hohenzollerns, commanded by an N.C.O., reconnoitring on the right front, flushed a French *vidette*, in a wood covering a knoll of rising ground, over the top of which went the imaginary frontier-line.

Being shot at, the Hohenzollerns retired to garrison. But about regimental soup-time, twelve or thereabouts, a battery of six French field-pieces came over the slope of the Spicherenberg heights, getting into position on a plateau half-way down.

And, while the Prussian drummers beat to arms; while the Hohenzollerns hastily posted their four companies, one on each of the town's three bridges, and sent one forwards on the heels of a squadron of Uhlans, up the Forbach Road, which runs through Saarbrück, rising as it trends to the west;—while the rest of the Uhlans stood to their horses in the Markt Platz, and the civilian population stopped to look on, or scuttled for cover, six shells were fired, three of them hitting a little beerhouse on the hill-brow, just off the Forbach Road—and the Imperial cannonade was over, the artillerists retired, and nothing more had happened,—though the *videttes* and patrols, Gallic and Teuton, had cracked away at each other from high noon till bat-light.

Discussing these things, the adept and the neophyte came to the Victoria, every window of which was crowded with Prussian officers, eating, drinking and smoking, or shouting for breakfast, coffee, beer, wine and tobacco in every key of the human register.

Distracted waiters ran about like ants, and before the packed and roaring caravanserai—keeping guard over one of the little decrepit iron tables that stood under the dusty acacias—a little table that had a fly-spotted cloth upon it, and a great glass basin filled with sugar cubes, and was further adorned with brown rings made by the bottoms of coffee-cups and beer-glasses, were the two friends referred to by P. C. Breagh's Good Samaritan.

One was a handsome, fair-haired, smiling man in the scarlet, yellow-faced, gold-adorned uniform of a crack regiment of British Light Dragoons, "a swell of the haw-haw type" Mr. Ticking would have termed him. With this splendid personage, who was generally referred to as "Major Brotherton," was a shorter, plainer individual with fluffy whiskers, attired as for the sports of the field, in a white,

low-crowned felt, large checked tweeds, in which orange and pink predominated; drab leggings and heavily-nailed highlows. A Dolland field-glass was slung from his shoulders, and over a neighbouring chair lay a huge box-coat, the multitudinous pockets of which appeared to contain his luggage, for a bath-sponge in a rubber bag rolled out of one as he rose up to welcome the leader of the party, and a box of areca-nut tooth-paste, and a hairbrush with a patent collapsible handle had to be shifted before the sponge could be replaced; just as though Mr. Toole had thought out the costume and the comic business for some travelling Briton in a new farce.

You may suppose P. C. Breagh blushing from consciousness of the contrast of his own travel-stained griminess with the Major's dazzling brilliancy, when that personage shook hands with him and said it was going to be a hot day. Introduced by his kindly patron to the sportsman in pink and orange tweeds with:

"Tower, this is a young countryman of mine—picked up at the station—just tumbled out of a troop-waggon full of Guards Infantry——"

The fluffy whiskered sportsman civilly nodded and observed: "And dashed good luck for him!" He added: "Doctor, if you recognised your baggage-van by that confounded goat you've had painted on it, I'll admit it's served some purpose besides frightening German crows!"

"Begad! it frightened me when I saw it on the siding this morning!" avowed the genial Doctor. "But how was I to know that the Berlin painter who undertook to copy the crest from my family coat-of-arms had got a magnifying eye?"

Said the man in cavalry uniform, smoothing his drooping moustache, and speaking with the drawl of Robertsonian comedy:

"At any rate, the size of the animal testifies to the

antiquity of your race, and so on. For in prehistoric days, I take it, goats were as big as cows are now !"

"My thanks to you, Brotherton, for supplying so plausible an explanation. I'll salve my pride of pedigree with it next time I'm taken for a travelling quack, and Prussian soldiers suffering with indigestion apply to me for pills and black-dose." He added, with his pleasant laugh, catching P. C. Breagh's glance of incredulity: "Actual fact, and no embroidery, I assure you ! You understand that to emphasize the strictly pacific nature of my calling, I'm exploiting my honorary degree for all it's worth !" He added, rather pointedly addressing the handsome cavalryman: "I've no special ambition to be shot as a combatant !"

"Nor have I," said the man in sporting checks, warmly. "And, Brotherton, my dear fellow, if this 'ere 'umble individual may add his advice to the counsel you've already had from the man, by Jove ! who of all men knows best what he's talkin' about, you'll stow that 'ere lady-killing uniform, and the silver helmet with the flowin' white plume away in some spare portmanteau, and leave 'em with your sabre, and the dazzlin' horse-furniture you showed me this morning, in charge of the landlord here, until you come back from the war-path safe and sound. Am I talking 'oss sense, Doctor ?"

"Indeed you are, Tower !" agreed the Doctor. "And, Chris, if you'll listen to him, I'll be eternally grateful to you. for your own sake. You've too much of what Tower and the Yankees call 'horse sense' not to know you're handicapped as a war correspondent by your glorious panoply !"

The Major smiled, and said, smoothing the drooping moustache with a fine white hand that wore a diamond-set signet:

"You can't blame me for thirsting to carry the harness

I've worn in sham fights for nearly half my lifetime, where bullets are flying in real earnest ?"

"Not a bit, dear fellow," said the Doctor, with a twinkle, "so long as you thirst to do it and don't ! That letter 'R' on your shoulder-cord is hardly big enough to serve as cover where those bullets are plentiful. And with your influence, prospects in life, and position, you'd be an ingrate to Fate if you were anxious to die at thirty-four."

Said Brotherton, knitting his fair eyebrows over the restless fire in his handsome eyes:

"Influence has been my bane, and the two other things have stood in my light ever since I was an urchin in knickerbockers. I've been Queen's page, and Prince's Equerry, and *aide-de-camp* on the Duke's Staff, and I've never seen an army in the field, or smelt powder, except at Aldershot, or Shorncliffe, or the Curragh Kildare, or at carbine-practice. What luck do you call that ?"

"Dashed hard !" said Tower.

Brotherton went on:

"I was a callow cadet at Sandhurst when the Regiment covered itself with glory at Balaclava, and as it has seen no active Service since—I've had no chance to find out whether I'm a real soldier, or a kid-glove one."

"Why not have exchanged——" began Tower. The Major shook his head.

"It wasn't to be done, for a very solid reason. My father, who served with Redlett's Brigade in the Crimea, was killed on Balaclava Day; and I was an only son. And my mother was a confidential Lady-in-Waiting, and knew where to apply, by Jove ! when my youthful ambition was to be cold-watered. . . . And now that the dear soul has gone, and I'm on the Retired list—after fifteen years of Windsor, Buckingham Palace, Whitehall, Pall Mall and Hyde Park—out breaks the war that I've been sighing for. And, after hovering about *The Thunderbolt* office till every

printer's devil knows me by name, and cooling my heels on the doorstep of your chambers in the Albion so persistently that your housekeeper believed me a bailiff with a writ—I managed to knock over Opportunity on the wing—and secured, thanks to you, Doctor! the chance of my life!"

He stood up, a handsome, martial figure in his scarlet and golden uniform, his eyes ablaze under the silver, gold-starred, white-plumed helmet, his fine face flushed with the battle-lust. And as he stretched out his hand across the spotty tablecloth, the feasting flies rose in a buzzing cloud.

"And glad am I if word of mine helped to get that chance for you, and you know it, Chris, and that it's a pleasure to have you with me," said the genial voice, as the Doctor took the offered hand. "But the military array, my dear fellow! The wampum and war-paint—that's what I kick at, with my gouty toe of fifty-two." He added: "But here comes the waiter with the coffee and eggs, and bread and butter, and something like the cold sliced ham I'm dying for—if only it doesn't happen to be raw! So sit down and we'll fortify ourselves against possible short-commons at Mayence. For that's where the King is, with Moltke and the Great Headquarters. And that's the destination we take rail for at twelve noon."

He added, as Brotherton and Tower started in their chairs, and P. C. Breagh quivered like a fox-terrier shown a rat. "As for the other chiefs, the Red Prince is—no one seems able to tell where—and the Crown Prince is on the frontier. Maybe we'll hear of him at Wissembourg by-and-by!"

"We should be there ourselves, in the thick of it," asserted Brotherton, savagely slashing at a pallid pat of butter, as Tower poured boiling milk and coffee into cups half-an-inch thick.

"We would be, Chris, me dear man!" said the Doctor,

liberally piling slices of cold veal and ham-sausage on his guests' plates, cutting bread and passing the pickles, "if the authorities panted to have English correspondents at their elbows while they're posting their pawns and pieces for the opening game!"

Brotherton retorted with a touch of pomposity:

"You take it lightly, sir. But for the honour of our profession, we should extort recognition at the hands of these foreigners. We should, as representatives of a great Power, submit to no belittling. Wielding as we do——"

"Keep all that toffee for the speechmaking end of a Newspaper Press dinner, Chris, my boy," drolled the Doctor. "Sure, 'tis we ourselves are the foreigners here—hard as it is of conception to a true-born Briton. And—since we're permitted on sufferance to accompany the forces of United Germany—the least we can do is to extract the necessary information painlessly!"

"But, my God! when I think of what may be doing at this moment!" broke out Brotherton, hitting the table, "I feel as if I should go stark, staring crazy! Have I sacrificed what I have sacrificed—and—and borne what I have borne, to trot like a stray tyke at the tail of a moving Army—picking up such scraps as may be thrown me from day to day? I tell you, sir, the mere idea is horrible to me! I cannot put it more mildly. My blood is not yet chilled by age, or my susceptibilities blunted. . . ." He pushed away his plate and rose, pulling his gloves from his belt, and taking up the cloak that had been thrown over a neighbouring chair. "I will ask you to excuse me! I have not yet received my papers back from the Halt Commandant. I will call upon him now!"

"Come with you, if you've no objection to walking in civilian company?" said Tower, swallowing a mouthful, emptying his coffee-cup, and reaching for the white felt hat and the box-coat.

"Come back about ten—I may have a scrap or two of news worth hearing," said the Doctor, with imperturbable good temper, and with a horsey touch of the hat on Tower's part, and a sulkily dignified salute from the Major, the tall soldierly figure in its scarlet and blue and gold, and the less dignified personality in the clothes that might have been worn by Toole in the part of a horsey squire, went away together, over the yellow-burnt grass and the dusty sun-baked gravel, dotted with little breakfasting groups of officers, who had been crowded out of the Hotel.

"I'm glad Tower's gone with him. He's in a frame of mind that won't make for pleasant relations with Prussian transport-officers," quoth the Doctor, looking after the retreating couple with something like a twinkle and something like a sigh. "But he's a grand fellow!—a splendid fellow is Brotherton!—even if he sometimes reminds me of the Quaker wife who said to her husband: "Friend Timothy, all the world is wrong except thee and me, and thou is a little wrong sometimes, Friend Timothy!"

And having got rid of his vexation in one gentle gibe at the idiosyncrasy of the petulant Brotherton, he fell to his breakfast again, urging his guest to a renewed attack on the strong ham-sausage and weak coffee, with the words:

"Bad policy—neglecting rations. Must stoke when fuel for the human engine is to be had, if you're going to chronicle the deeds of an army that fights as it marches. And when you've cleaned your plate, and drunk another cup of coffee, you shall tell me why you came here and what you want to do?"

He commented, when P. C. Breagh, duly replete, had stated the nature of his aims and ambitions; touching upon his discouragements as briefly as might be:

"War Correspondence! . . . Well, I'll admit I guessed that you'd set your heart on something of the kind, when I saw you tumble out of that troop-waggon with a note-

book sticking out of your jacket-pocket. And so old Knewbit financed ? Sporting of him !—and he deserves that his letters should be worth reading. Call 'em ' Experiences of a Tyke at the Tail of an Army.' " He added, his bright brown eyes twinkling through their gold-rimmed glasses. " For that's where you've got to be !"

He lighted a huge cigar, twisted round his green-painted iron chair and sat astride upon it, resting on its rickety back his folded arms, short and strong, with small muscular hands, sunburned like his bearded face and thick bull-neck.

" I am not joking, my young acquaintance. Can't you understand that to keep abreast with even a secondary Staff in the war-field you have to sweat out money at every pore ? And—without gold for transport or thalers for *trinkgelt*—or seasoned knowledge to help you even if your pockets were full, what can you accomplish ? I tell you frankly—nothing at all ! But if you'll follow on the fringe of a Division, marching with the hangers-on and officers' servants—you'll get many a scrap of useful news and many a meaty bone of valuable information tossed to you day by day. And even with the rear of the Army Corps you elect to stick to, you'll sup your fill of raw-head and bloody bones—take the assurance from me. Will you—with the advice ?"

The great man was so unassuming in his kindness that the little one hardly grasped the full extent of it, even as he said, blinking as though a cinder of the Lower Rhineland Railroad had got into his eye:

" Yes, sir, and thank you ! I shall never forget how good you've been to me !" and got reply:

" You've no business to be here, boyo, but since you are, more by luck than grace, use your eyes and stuff your memory with things worth keeping. Now as my time is precious,—is there anything more you want to know ?"

" Only one thing. . . . I have been puzzled by an—an

incident that happened to a—fellow in my own position. . . ." P. C. Breagh boggled horribly: "Was regularly set on getting to the Front—hadn't a notion how to set about it—when he—accidentally—managed to get hold of a—kind of official authorisation. An informal pass, certifying the bearer as trustworthy—written and signed by Count Bismarck himself. . . ."

"And that wasn't half bad," the Doctor said, knocking the ash off the huge cigar, "for a beginner pretty well, it seems to me!"

Said P. C. Breagh:

"He was tremendously elated at having got the paper. It seemed to smooth away every difficulty. But later, when he found himself in touch with Prussian Army men—they,—not only the gentlemen privates qualifying for commissions, but the common rankers,—dropped him like a hot potato once they knew! And—I'd like to know the reason why they cut me—I mean him?—because they supposed him to belong to the Secret Intelligence Department? '*A spy is—a spy! Excuse me from further conversation!*'" His mouth twisted wryly, repeating the hateful words.

"I—understand." The Doctor stroked his beard. "And previously this young Englishman and the rank-and-file of the Guard Infantry"—P. C. Breagh kept as straight an upper-lip as was possible—"had chatted together upon friendly terms?"

"That was it. He had got on splendidly with them—one fellow especially. And—it hurt, being suddenly sent to Coventry! . . ."

"And does it strike you"—there was infinite sagacity in the clear brown eyes behind the gold-rimmed glasses, "that if you had been chatting freely with a supposed equal, about your own position, prospects, and opinions, you would have 'dropped him like a hot potato' if you

had suspected him of being commissioned to sound you for French sympathies, predilections, and so forth—on the eve of hostilities with France ?"

A light broke in upon the darkness in which Carolan had groped. His eyes became circular, and his mouth shaped for a whistle. He exploded:

"Oh, hang it ! I never thought of anything so—so beastly. . . . I wondered why Valverden shied, supposing me a Secret Information agent, when the Army has shoals of 'em. . . . But that Government should set such fellows sniffing at the heels of the Army—of course I never thought of that. It's not—cricket, is it, sir ?"

The Doctor's hearty laugh pulled round the heads of a breakfasting party of officers not far off. He said, lowering his voice:

"You remember the nigger's definitions of verse and prose, don't you ? '*Go up mill-dam fall down slam ! dat verse. Go up mill-dam, fall down whoppo, dat blank verse.*' Prussian military authority may hold, that between spying on the enemy before the Army, and spying on the Army before the enemy there is as little distinction. Though they'd think differently at the Horse Guards, thank the Lord ! By the way, with regard to that gaunt, long-legged Lieutenant-Colonel of Uhlans of the Landwehr who claimed to know something of you, rather luckily for your ambitions !—where did you come across him ? '*An English schoolboy*,' he called you, '*crazy to see War !*' "

P. C. Breagh explained:

"He did know something of me, sir !—though it was the merest chance—our meeting. Until a week ago he was a teacher of English at the Berners Street Institute of Languages, and lodged at my landlady's. And they recalled him to Berlin a few hours before the Declaration of War."

XXXV.

It was the Doctor's turn to whistle.

"Phew! So that's how they spy out and trap deserters from their Reserve and Landwehr. Clever—uncommonly! Possibly it's not business to tell you, but you've given away a genuine bit of information. And as a lesson in caution for the future, I shall annex your nugget—do you hear? In return—I've a pass for an extra groom who has shot the moon with three weeks' double pay in advance, the cowardly beggar! And—supposing you're not too proud—I'll take you with me as far as Mayence."

"I don't know how to thank you, sir!"

"Leave thanking for the present." He pulled out the gold chronometer, secured by its twisted thong. "Ten o'clock, and here come Towers and Brotherton, like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, '*with a kind of confession in their looks which their modesties have not craft enough to colour.*' No news to be had? No starting for Mayence before twelve sharp, in spite of honied entreaties lavished on the authorities?"

"Deuce a scrap!"

"Devil a minute!"

They threw themselves upon chairs, hot, dusty and panting. They had got their papers back, countersigned, from a kind of understrapper, after, to do him justice, very little delay. But of intelligence, not a modicum was obtainable, except that the Emperor was said to be close to the frontier near Saarbrück at the head of the Imperial Guards.

"Though they've been saying that for forty-eight hours," grumbled Tower, "and I'm dam' if I call it anything but Ancient History."

At which candid confession the Doctor's mouth twitched under the thick, curling moustache of rusty iron-gray. He

said, his quick eye noting an excited stir and bustle about the thronged entrance of the hotel, and the crowding of officers about another, who had a paper in his hand:

"Those officers have heard—something that is not Ancient History. And look at the fellows who were eating at the tables in the windows; they've something tastier to discuss now than the landlord's indifferent grub!"

It was true. In the long dining-room, in the restaurant, and in the reading-room, which had been converted into a temporary coffee-room, men were swarming like bees and buzzing like them, while detached, staccato sentences shaped out of the buzz. "Saarbrück . . . Spicheren . . . Frossard . . . Colonel von Pestel. . . ."

"Something up. . . ." Towers adjusted his eyeglass. Brotherton, catching a sentence shouted by an officer of a *jäger* battalion to another green-coat leaning from a window on the second-floor, jumped as though he had been prodded with a bayonet, and turned a flaming face upon his friend:

"A telegram has come in. . . . There has been serious fighting at Saarbrück. Did they lie to us at the station, then? Officers and gentlemen——"

"Softly, Chris!" The Doctor's hand upon his arm checked him on the verge of a fiery outburst. "I fancy they've a right to hold back intelligence despatched from Headquarters when the senders mark the wire '*Delay*.'"

"No doubt, but I had better interview the Commandant. Details would be worth having!" said Brotherton, adding with a peculiar smile, "Or at least I, in my inexperience, am inclined to think so."

Came the quick answer:

"You can have details now—without troubling the Commandant! 'Full'—well, as fully as I got them—under a strict undertaking of secrecy for four hours—at six o'clock this morning!"

Brotherton turned as ashen-pale as he had hitherto been

crimson. Towers called out gleefully, as active little thrills of excitement coursed down P. C. Breagh's spine:

"Bravo, Doctor! And you had it up your sleeve all the time. 'Unfold, thou man of 'orrid mystery!' as Miss Le Grange says at Astley's in the *Spectre's Bride*."

"There's not so much to unfold. But from eight thousand to ten thousand French troops made an attack on Saarbrück yesterday. Some battalions of the 8th Prussian Army Corps had augmented the original garrison, and their nearest support was at Lebach, five miles to the rear. A mitrailleuse-battery and some field-guns posted on the Reppertsberg drove the Blue Uniforms out of the town!"

Towers said: "Then why the deuce . . ." and broke off. Brotherton gloomed heavily. The Doctor went on:

"The Emperor and the Prince Imperial were on the heights, with the Imperial Staff, to see the show—an astonishing spectacle it must have been. Frossard, in the centre with supports drawn from the Second Corps—Marshal Bazaine on the right, with troops picked from the Third. And in command of the Fifth Corps, de Failly, who crossed the river at Saarguemines."

Queried Tower:

"And when the big bow-wow had made the little one drop the bone, he didn't stick to it?"

The Doctor returned:

"No—and that's the puzzle of the whole affair. The whole glorious display resolved itself into a cannonade, with occupation of the heights on the left bank, and nothing further. Though the French foreposts actually occupied the three bridges and held the town."

Tower said, his pale eyes sharp with intelligence:

"Bet you a tenner it was done for the boy. Got up to blood the young 'un—cockerel of the Walk Imperial. Gee-whillikins!—What telegrams Nap must have fired off to St. Cloud!"

"They'll have read them in Berlin and London long before they get to us," said the Doctor, shrugging. "Where are you off to, Brotherton ?"

Brotherton returned—and the tone was offensive, if the words were not:

"To do what my senior Special does not appear to think necessary—wire the news to Printing House Square."

The elder answered with a good-humoured twinkle:

"Why, that was done hours back, by grace of the authorities. They bridled my tongue, but left my pen unhampered. Knowing, of course, that the British Public must wait for its news until breakfast-time to-morrow. Were you speaking to me, Brotherton ?"

The Major was saying in a voice as little like his own as the livid mask of rage he turned on the Doctor resembled his ordinarily calm and placid visage:

"I was addressing you, though it pleased you not to hear me. I was asking you what you meant, by G——! in stealing a march on the man you've called your friend ?"

The Doctor's eyes blazed behind their gold-rimmed glasses. Anger darkened his handsome sunburnt face. He drew himself up and said, speaking simply and with dignity:

"How do you infer that I have 'stolen a march on you' ? By taking the apology they give one here for a cold tub at cockcrow and going over to the Hauptmann's office with our papers while you and Tower were sleeping like——"

"Like dormice, by Gad !" put in Tower. "And so we were. And it's a case of the early bird—and not the first time, I'll swear—by thousands ! And, Brotherton—you ought to apologise. You were simply infernally rude just now !"

Said the Major loftily:

"I gave it as my opinion that I had been dealt with unfairly. I do not withdraw the words I used. But I com-

prehend that my senior in the service of the paper is not anxious to share the credit of the earliest intelligence with regard to what is taking place on the frontier just now."

"For God's sake, Chris, don't say what you'll be sorry for!"

"I'll say what I think, to you, sir, or to the King of Prussia!"

The gray-bearded, strongly-featured face, with the look of generous sorrow on it, and the younger, fairer, handsomer face, with the stamp of arrogance, and vanity and pride, marring its manly beauty, confronted each other in silence, until with an impatient snarl, Brotherton swung round upon his heel.

"Look here!—look here!—where the merry hell are you off to?" Tower spluttered, grabbing at the sleeve of the splendid scarlet tunic. "Not going to part company for a misunderstanding—hey?"

"I am going to part company," Brotherton returned bitterly, freeing himself from the detaining hand, "since the jealousy that hampered me in my military career threatens to mar my prospects now. Where I am going to I cannot tell you—probably you will hear from me, but I cannot promise it. Good-bye! Or—if you prefer it—*Auf wiedersehen!*"

He shook hands with Tower, nodded coldly to the astonished P. C. Breagh, formally saluted the Doctor, who returned with a slight bow, picked up his cap and cloak and strode away over the sun-dried grass and the hot yellow gravel, making for the gaudily painted iron gates that ended the drive.

"Oh, Chris, man-alive, and am I jealous of ye?" said the Doctor, his spectacles dewy with irrepressible laughter, as the gallant figure in its gorgeous scarlet and golden trappings was swallowed in a crowd of blue uniforms: "If you'd waited another minute, I'd have told you of some-

thing else your senior in the service of the paper by seventeen years, some odd days, and a minute or two isn't anxious to share with you, and that is a reputation for not being a hot-headed, unreasonable young ass !"

"He's making a bee-line for the Railway Station," said Tower, wiping his heated forehead with a gaudily-hued silk handkerchief, "and if he comes across any of those Transport swells there'll be the deuce to pay. He's got the bit in his teeth and his tail tight down over the ribbons, by George !—and he'll kick the trap to pieces and lame himself to a dead certainty. Shall I go after him and try to *soother* him down a bit ?"

The Doctor shrugged assent.

"If you think 'twill be any good ! . . . Meanwhile I have to write a letter or two, and pack, or rout my man out of the servants' quarters to do it. As for you, my boyo !"—he turned on P. C. Breagh a keen, humorous glance that summoned up blushes to mantle under the railway grime—"a wash and brush-up will do you no harm, and besides—my absconding Berliner isn't described on his passport as a black !"

Tower came back in half-an-hour, reporting failure in the attempt to pacify Brotherton, who nevertheless joined the Doctor's little party at the station, having apparently recovered his serenity of temper, and abandoned his determination to forswear his senior's company.

Beer, coffee, bread and meat were still being lavishly distributed among the troops continually parading for departure, and the train-loads of soldiers passing through. And the exodus of panic-stricken visitors, flying from the little up-Rhine watering-places, in apprehension of the arrival of the Emperor with his mitrailleuses, continued; until, in another hour, the shrunken finger of the Warlock wagged, and thenceforth the Rhine Valley Railways were

totally blocked for civilian passengers, and given over to the transport of men and munitions of war.

Presently, when a train of coal-trucks from Kreuznach came jolting into Bingen, bearing on their sable flanks the chalk hieroglyphics that signified their official emptiness, P. C. Breagh was destined to behold personages of the loftiest rank and the utmost exclusiveness, German Serene Highnesses, Austrian Duchesses, and English peeresses, with their children and lap-dogs, their maids, *chefs*, coachmen, lackeys, and grooms, packed into these grimy vehicles without precedence or selection, or any seating-accommodation other than that afforded by an empty sack or an armful of straw.

The troop-train conveying the mounted gendarmerie of the Third Army Corps—huge men equipped as dragoons—to Mayence, afforded accommodation to the men, horses and vans of the Doctor's party. Long before the fortifications came in sight the roads were blotted out by marching columns, and the fields were dotted with moving transport-trains.

At Mayence, whose stone-paved streets were roaring with the passage of iron-shod wheels, the trampling of iron-shod hoofs, and the measured tramping of infantry battalions, the Doctor, stepping from the train, was seized upon by friends. Yet after the first eager interchange of interrogations and answers, he found time to bestow a parting hand-grip on Carolan and a final word of advice.

"And—put this in your pocket—it'll be a help to you if it doesn't hang you. They're lithographed by the Prussian War Department, and every German officer has one. And here's something else, a lot more useful than the revolver those chaps stole from you. You'll know better than to take it unless in case of need!"

'This' was a folding pocket-map of the Eastern Depart-

ments of France, with certain military routes very nicely marked in red upon it. While the something else proved to be a wicker-covered metal pocket-flask, containing about half-a-pint of the whisky of Kinahan.

The donor added:

"Remember, train your memory to pigeon-hole things for later description, and never be caught taking notes or fighting on a side! And—be on your guard with women, pretty ones especially. And—there's a scrap of paper in the pocket of the map-cover, may come in handy, at a pinch. No, no thanks! General von Reigen, that's the light blue Würtemburg Hussar officer talking to Tower—tells me Moltke and his staff are quartered at the Hotel de Holland. If so, the King won't be far off. He thinks Bismarck has gone to a house outside the town, but he can't swear to it. There goes a carriage with the Red Prince's big buck-nigger on the box. Shows his Highness must be somewhere hereabouts. As for the Crown Prince, nobody will say anything. He's marching—with an end in view. And they say the French are shooting uncommonly badly—and that half of the Reserve men don't know how to use their chassepôts. Well, they'll have practice enough before long. Good luck, and good-bye!"

The "scrap of paper," upon later examination, proved to be a five-pound note, placed there by the hand that later penned these wonderful war-letters—under a wayside hedge, at a corner of a plank bivouac-table, on the zinc counter of a wine-shop filled with carousing soldiers—at the ebony and tortoiseshell *écritoire* of Madame la Marquise, in the boudoir of the château that had been so sorely battered by those big potatoes of Moltke's.

Kind little, great man; a whole chestful of Orders had no power to chill the big warm heart that prompted your many deeds of generosity. It moulders in a coffin now, and the decorations are dimming with dust in a glass-topped

box. But beyond the Veil that parts the seen from the unseen world, I like to think that there were waiting for you rewards and honours, in comparison with which the most coveted earthly insignia were vilest dirt and dross.

XXXVI.

Said the sutler-woman, whose coarse black hair was powdered white as any lady's of the early eighteenth century, smearing the dust from the peonies of her cheeks with a brawny arm that was dusty as any miller's:

"Young man, if thou stick to thy word, and take good care of the jackass, remembering the sharp nail-spike in the end of the whip-butt if he tries to kick or bite—I'll creep in under the tilt and take a forty-winks. Lord be thanked! my legs are sound, but they ache a bit!"

The jackass, who boasted the not inglorious name of "Rumschottel," laid back his ears viciously at his mistress's reference to the persuasive spike in the whip-butt, and the young man addressed by his temporary employer nodded in assent without opening his lips. For the dust in which the little tilt-cart moved was almost solid, being kicked up by the Seventh Corps of the Second Army of Germany, in line of march through the Haardt Wald by Kaiserslautern.

The sutler-woman's young man had marched with the Fifth Corps from Mayence by Oppenheim and Alzey, and had picked up an American tourist who knew of a short cut to Kaiserslautern, and had mislaid the Army Corps in trying to find it. Staffs, squadrons, batteries, battalions, transport and baggage had vanished like smoke among these vineyard-and-forest-clad hills, these pine-jacketed gorges, these roads that ran between natural ramparts of granite, or passed through quaint villages tucked under hillsides crimson and gold with laden apple-trees, and

dominated by ancient castles perched on towering platforms of rock.

Scenery palls when the thigh-bones seem wearing through their sockets; when the stomach complains for very emptiness, and there are bloody blisters inside the ragged socks. The American who had been so cocksure about the road to Kaiserslautern was lying up under a peasant's penthouse-thatch, at a twenty-mile distant village, drinking Kirsch, nursing his own skinless heels, and reading up "Murray." His late companion had refused to give in, and perseverance had won its reward. Sixty miles or so above Kreuznach, where the main road forks right and left, climbing the shoulders of the Nahe Valley, he had met the Ninth Corps of the Second Army marching up from Bingen, and hobbled at the heels of one of the dusty battalions until he could hobble no more.

The sutler-woman had come upon him sitting pumped-out by the wayside, had sold him bread, coffee and sausage, doctored his blisters, supplied him with tallowed strips of linen to replace his worn-out socks, earned his gratitude, and displayed no reluctance to profit by her philanthropy, when he had volunteered to help lead the jackass as far as Kaiserslautern. True, he spoke a most vile jargon, but you cannot have everything. And the weather was so beautifully dusty, thought the sutler-woman, that an assistant would certainly be of use. Without the dust that clogs the human throat, the trade in liquid lubricants would be less roaring. And the tilt-cart contained beside other marching-requisites, a twenty-gallon barrel of rather lukewarm beer.

The young man nodded again as the cart-shafts tilted in the hame-straps, and a command to throw his weight on the front-board was issued from behind. There was a good deal of creaking as he obeyed. A heavy weight suddenly added to the jackass's load made Rumschottel look malevo-

lently round his near-side blinker, and display an upper row of long orange-coloured teeth in testimony of his desire to bite. Then his driver slid off the board, took the rope reins, and continued to trudge beside him, keeping well to the low hedgerow so as to leave a clear space between the sutler's cart and the seemingly endless column of dusty infantrymen, striding steadily forward through a blazing August noon.

Ahead, where black-and-white and white-and-black lance-pennons flickered at the turn of the road below a steep hill-shoulder covered with bronzing vineyards heavy with purpling grapes, the light-blue of a Prussian Dragoon regiment, and the facings of a squadron of Red Uhlans showed through the thick coating of dust that clung to horse and man. But the dark uniforms of a succeeding battery of Horse Artillery and the indigo or rifle-green of the battalions that marched with the needle-gun, had long ago given place to a pervasive whitey-brown.

Schmidt, Klaus, and Klein were pressing on in spite of dust and an eighty-five-in-the-shade thermometer, you must understand, so as not to get left out of the fighting that must be going on ahead. For the First and Second Corps of the Second Army, with the Headquarters Staff, were known to have reached Homburg, and on the previous night the Army of the Crown Prince had bivouacked behind the Klingbach, south of Landau. . . . Five or six in the morning, supposing him to have marched at dawn, would see him well across the frontier. And scouts on the hills had heliographed and flag-signalled the arrival of Imperial battalions and artillery at Wissembourg, and blue Baden Dragoons reported a cavalry camp at Selz. For all they knew, "Unser Fritz" and the Napoleon were even then at grips.

So they marched—as they had marched since they detrained at Bingen, swinging starkly on under the weight of

the knapsack, eighty rounds of ammunition, rolled great-coat, camp-kettle, sword, spade, water-bottle, haversack and bread-roll, or half-a-dozen flint-hard brown biscuits threaded together on a bit of string.

Men sweated and blistered under the relentless sun, but not many fell out, and there were very few severe cases of sunstroke, these for the most part falling to the lot of Reservists. And in the hottest part of the day a plump of thunder broke among the hills eastward, and a deluge that followed turned the dust on them to paste. Then the sun came out again and baked the paste hard; and the sutler-woman stuck her head out between the front flaps of the cart-tilt, and told her young man to pull up for a bit of a rest and a snack.

So P. C. Breagh unharnessed Rumschottel, and the jackass rolled in a sandy hollow in asinine fashion, and rose up braying and refreshed. Then, quite mildly submitting to be hobbled by his mistress, he fell-to upon a patch of thistles that the battery-wheels had spared. And the sutler-woman, who answered to the name of Krumpf, produced black bread and cheese, with peppery sausage of Brunswick, and a mighty tin bottle of cold milk-coffee, from the depths of her vehicle, and liberally dispensed of these refreshments to her servitor. She partook of them herself, largely, lacing her own mug of coffee out of a private bottle of *schnaps*.

"*Herr Je!*" she grumbled presently, "what is he gaping at?" For her young man had finished eating, and was absorbed in watching marching legs. . . . She added, snorting scornfully: "We might sit here and sleep for three hours, and they would still be going by when we woke up. . . . Horses' legs and men's legs, just as though they had got clockwork inside them. . . . It was so in Schleswig Holstein, and it will be so in France. And what the Danes got the French will get, and that will be a thumping!"

She nodded directly afterwards and dozed heavily, leaning her broad back against the wheel of her cart.

Perhaps she slept a quarter-of-an-hour while the dusty men marched by, four abreast, without slackening pace or changing step. They had hard-featured, serious, intelligent faces for the most part, thought P. C. Breagh, though here and there was a visage that bore the stamp of vice upon it, or was pimply with drink, or brutal, or merely sly. They had ceased to sing, though their bivouac of the night before had been patriotically vocal; the dusty instruments of the bandsmen came less frequently out of their dustier bags. They marched for the most part in silence, though the trampling of their feet made the solid ground reverberate.

Sometimes a battalion would quit the road, and hedges would go down before it as by magic; and through the middle of a field of browning corn or whitening barley a broad white highway would be beaten hard as any threshing-floor, bare of anything save the most insignificant tokens of their passage, such as a covey of late-hatched partridge chicks trampled into rags, a broken strap, a fragment of biscuit, a scattering of potato-peels, an empty match-box, the paper that had held an ounce of tobacco, and many empty bottles that had held beer. Rarely, a great scurry in the dust where some obstreperous charger had reared and fallen with his rider, the extent of whose injuries might be guessed by a clotted puddle of drying blood and a broken stirrup-iron. Thus, under the rhythmical tread of the dusty boots, as under the iron-shod wheels and iron-shod hoofs that had preceded and would follow them—green things were beaten from the face of earth, and fur and feather fled, as they were flying before the Third Army, marching towards Wissembourg; as they were flying before Steinmetz, bringing the First Army from the North.

Where they halted they left their taint by the scorched

hedgerows, and the black circles of their great fires remained to tell of them, like the soil-pits that scarred the fields where they had bivouacked. Last night, by some delusion of the wearied senses of sight and hearing, they had seemed to the boy who had slept on the outskirts of their camp to be marching even as they slept. The lusty snoring of the countless swathes of sleepers between the long, orderly rows of stacked needle-guns topped with gilt-spiked helmets, suggested the rushing of a host in onward motion. When the boy who had lain through the night under the sutler-woman's cart to guard it from light-fingered marauders had fallen into a troubled slumber, his blistered feet had carried him on in dreams behind them still. Then in the blue dusk before dawn Cavalry trumpets far ahead, and shrill bugles near at hand had shrilled reveille—and when the tremendous war-machine rushed on again once more, the dusty boy had been caught up once more by the wind of its going, and drawn along with it, as a chip is whirled in the under-draught of a rushing express-train, or a wisp of hay is caught up by a travelling tornado, and borne upon its dreadful way.

He grinned now, reminiscent of the Doctor's analogy, as a blunt-nosed, shaggy dog of no distinguishable breed trotted past, sneezing, between the files at the rear of a half-company-column. "Whose is the beast?" he heard a soldier ask his neighbour on the right-hand, and: "Nobody's—joined the battalion at Bingen!" was the reply. Upon which the inquirer tossed the canine waif a scrap of biscuit, with "Here, Bang!" and Bang, thus adopted and christened, neatly caught the morsel, bolted it, and trotted on,—no more an ownerless mongrel, but a regimental dog.

Now the sutler-woman was waking, rubbing the sleep out of a pair of eyes which were less bright than they had been before their owner became addicted to the use of beer with

schnaps as a lacing. She had an incipient beard, and the voice of a heavy dragoon, yet there was a tinge of womanly coquetry in her way of straightening her big, battered bonnet, and adjusting the checked blue-and-yellow shawl tied crosswise over her voluminous bust. She yawned, struggled to the perpendicular position, with some difficulty, owing to her corpulence; and cried, pointing a stout red finger at her henchman, yet squatting in the shade of a clump of dusty whins:

"Lord! if he isn't mooning still, with his chin on his two fists! Such a *gimpel* I never yet did see! But they say all the *Englisch* are mad, their climate makes them so. Otherwise would they not live in their country?—but no! they can't! *Hier!* Catch Rumschottel, and let's be moving!"

P. C. Breagh obliged, undisturbed by the appellation of idiot, or the contumely heaped on the United Kingdom. It was better to be on the black books of the sutler-woman than distinguished by her too-favourable regard.

For though the stout proprietress of the tilt-cart had undoubtedly played the part of a Samaritaness towards the wandering Englander, she was, it had to be owned, more charitable than chaste; trading not only in beer, bread, sausages, matches, cheap packs of cards, dominoes, pipe-tobacco, sweets and pickled cucumbers, but following, between marches, the oldest profession in the world.

Being invited on the previous evening to convey a verbal billet of the amorous kind to a young Pioneer of Mecklenburg Artillery, P. C. Breagh had flatly declined. Conceiving the refusal to be prompted by jealousy, Frau or Fräulein Krumpf had not taken it in ill part. Until, being undeceived upon this point, she uncorked the vials of her anger and exerted a gift for vituperation justly celebrated among her clients of the rank and file.

"You threadling, you whipper-snapper! You pickled herring in a jacket and breeches! There is a man buried

in the Domkirche at Mainz, where I belong, that has been dead over a hundred years, and has more of good red life in him to-day than thou! '*Frauenlob*,' they called him, because he couldn't live without women, and women! and when he died, eight of the town-girls carried him on his bier. And they poured wine over his grave so that you stepped up to your knees in it—all because he had liked the women as a tom-cat likes cream!"

The first spate of her resentment over, she had accepted the situation. But the wound remained; and as the better-half of Potiphar may have railed at her husband's young Hebrew steward, the sutler-woman nagged at the young man who limped beside her jackass, through the deep welcome shade of ancient oak-forests or over long blistering stretches of naked mountain roads, as those tireless, dusty men marched by.

There was no keeping up with them; they passed, and others swarmed after them. Batteries succeeded battalions, ammunition and baggage, ambulance and commissariat-trains were followed by yet other battalions, while the sweat dripped into the eyes of P. C. Breagh and the skin wore off his heels.

At midday, when his chest hurt with the very act of breathing and his straining muscles seemed about to crack, a man died.

He was an infantryman of Hessians, and it happened quite suddenly. P. C. Breagh, who had long ago abandoned all unnecessary integuments, marching without coat, vest, collar, or braces, had noticed him a moment previously swinging along with unbuttoned uniform—it was marvellous how small a minority of the soldiers had sought this method of relief. . . . His open shirt showed the lighter skin of his bare chest, his *pickelhaube* was perched upon the cooking-pan crowning his knapsack-top, and he had draped a wetted red handkerchief over his steaming head.

Save that his face was purple with congested blood, so that his pale, staring eyes seemed colourless by comparison and he walked with open mouth, the Adam's apple in his lean throat jerking as he gulped down the hot air, he conveyed no dire impression of breakdown. But suddenly he stumbled and spun round, as if seized by sudden giddiness, clutching at his shirt-breast, dropping his gun. Men were thrown out of step as he fell, with an absurd clatter of metal and tin-ware. Yet they marched on without a pause.

Others came, stepping over the fallen figure lying huddled in the way. Its fingers moved, paddling in the dust; and P. C. Breagh, yielding to a sudden impulse, dropped the bridle of the jackass, ran in, grabbed hold, and hauled the heavy body out of the way.

"What are you doing, born stupid that you are?" the sutler-woman cried viciously, for Rumschottel had swerved aside to the hedge and was ravenously devouring weeds. She added, becoming aware of the prone infantryman, who was lying on his back staring at the sun unwinkingly: "It is all up with that one, his eyes are turning white already. Such as he have never six *pfennigs* to pay for other folks' time and trouble. Better leave him for the *Feldlazaretl* to pick up."

But P. C. Breagh only grunted dourly, hunkering by the prostrate Hessian, and with a parting sarcasm the proprietress of Rumschottel seized her beast's head and trudged on. If she had looked back, she would have seen good Irish whisky wasted. For despite the shade of the tree under which he was hauled, the rolled-up coat thrust under his head and the laving of his face and breast with spirit, it was all up with the man, as she had prophesied.

He grabbled with his sunburnt fingers in the dust a little, and tried to lift a hand to his perspiring chest. By the tin crucifix dependent from a leather bootlace round his neck, you could tell that he tried to make the sacred Sign.

Then his eyes rolled up, and an expression of great surprise overspread his discoloured countenance. His knees jerked and a sound like a rotten stick of wood, breaking, came from his open mouth.

"*A-a-ach !*"

XXXVII.

He would breathe for possibly an hour longer, but practically the man was dead. Still listening for the faint, intermittent heart-beats, a splash of gravel stung P. C. Breagh smartly in the neck and cheek, and the dull thunder of horse-hoofs came unpleasantly close and stopped. He lifted his ear from the rattling chest, and looked up into the face of an infantry officer, who was reining up his beast and bending from the saddle as he looked at the casualty on the ground. The officer asked in staccato sentences:

"It is a case of heat-stroke ? You are a doctor ?"

P. C. Breagh answered shortly:

"Enough of one to know that there is no hope."

The horse, a fine, spirited animal, hoofed the ground impatiently. The captain said, patting the glossy, sweating neck:

"Ah ! Will you kindly show me his identification-tag ?"

P. C. Breagh found the zinc label, bearing the moribund Hessian's name, regimental, battalion and company-number, and turned it face-upwards on the discoloured breast. The captain, leaning from the saddle, read, and mentally registered. His keen eyes, hedged with dusty fair lashes, narrowed against the blinding white sunshine and somewhat bloodshot with heat and fatigue, had something like a smile in them; and for some reason, to the dusty young man who squatted on the ground by the dying, the smile was an offence. He scowled, and the officer, noting this, asked curiously:

"Were you acquainted with that one, then ?"

He indicated the body by an overhand thumb-gesture. Resenting the gesture for the same inexplicable reason, P. C. Breagh responded with a head-shake. The captain pursued, pulling the damp and blackened reins between his gloved fingers, stained with his own sweat and the horse's within the palms. . . .

"I asked, because you seemed—how shall one put it ?—sorry for him, you know !"

The dust-smeared, freckled face turned on the interlocutor angrily. The smouldering fire in the eyes leaped into sudden flame:

"I am, damned sorry for him ! To come by his end like this—without firing a single shot !"

There was something unusual about this little dialogue, carried on between the smart mounted officer, and the footsore, untidy pedestrian, over the body stretched out by the roadside. As the broad stream of marching men flowed by, curious eyes rolled their way, the whites showing startlingly in their owners' sunburned faces. Men wondered what *he* had died of, and what they were discussing there. And P. C. Breagh went on, his mouth pulled awry with wrathful bitterness:

"He was as good a patriot, I'd bet my hat !—as any fellow in his battalion. He set as much store as others by King and Fatherland ! I daresay he dreamed of getting the Iron Cross given him for some tremendous act of gallantry, and astonishing his wife—he wears a wedding ring, so I suppose he had one !—with it when he got home. And now it's all over. It makes me feel sick. All over, and nothing to show for it !"

The blank, rolled-up eyes, staring unwinkingly in the face of the coppery, westering sun, and the discoloured face, with the look of agonised surprise now fixed upon it, seemed to echo dumbly: "Nothing but this !" The officer returned:

"*So!* but there will be a war-pension for the widow, as he died upon Active Service, and that will not be so bad, after all. And presently the *Feldlazarett* will come up and put him in a waggon. He will be buried at sundown, when we halt. . . . They will give him a firing-party and a bugler—everything will be done decently. After a battle there is not always—you understand? . . ."

He shrugged, and the Danish and Austrian war-medals on his dark blue tunic glinted, in witness of his ripe knowledge and experience. Hating him still more vigorously, P. C. Breagh ended his sentence:

"Not always time to stow away lost pawns!"

"'Pawns!' My worthy sir, *our* pawns are battalions!" The captain laughed, showing even, but tobacco-stained teeth under his thick brown moustache. "This was—a unit among myriads of myriads. . . . You will find plenty of work waiting for you among his comrades, if, as I guess, you are a graduate in surgery out for practice. . . . Let me advise you to join a Red Cross ambulance—the arm-badge is a protection—of a definite kind."

He saluted, gave rein, and the tired, yet impatient horse snorted relief, and cantered on with him, sending another shower of dust-grains and gravel-grit over the extinct "unit among myriads of myriads" and the unkempt Samaritan hunkering by its side.

A scalding wave of bitterness and resentment had swept over him a moment previously. Behind and through the officer's brown-eyed, good-looking face he had seen the fierce, challenging blue stare and great domed skull and bulldog jaw of the great Minister who made wars at will. And the limp, dead body lying by the beaten track where twenty thousand men thus clad and armed had passed already, had awakened in him a rage of pity, and a fury of disgust.

This War that had seemed such a huge and splendid

world-event, shaking sovereigns upon their thrones and stirring nations to wildest enthusiasm, meant catastrophes innumerable as minute; infinitesimal tragedies never to be heard of, related or known,—involving the humbler and the weaker among the people of both sides.

Meanwhile—here was a letter, pinned inside the dead man's shirt, an ill-spelt, loving scrawl, containing a wilted sprig of some kind of garden-herb, smelling evilly.

"Glory is glory," said the poor soul who wrote, "but so thou bring thyself safe back to me and the *Kinder*, that will be enough." Meanwhile, entreating her lambkin to remember that "old man" kept off the fleas, she enclosed "a bit picked from the clump in the garden border by the old red gooseberry bush," and with a tender inquiry after his poor corns, and a row of blotty kisses, signed herself his faithful wife Lottchen.

One could only be sorry for poor Lottchen, and note down her address, together with her deceased lambkin's name and regiment, and send her presently a line from a stranger who had been near him when he died.

For the unit amongst myriads of myriads, nothing could be done beyond pulling his yet pliant limbs into decent straightness and folding the already stiffening hands upon the unheaving breast. Then P. C. Breagh covered his face with the red handkerchief, and—a tin crucifix being suspended from the neck by a leather bootlace—touched the violet-mottled lips with it, and whispered a prayer for the departed soul, before resuming possession of his discarded jacket, and shouldering his knapsack, he trudged upon his way.

The blazing sun set in a great whirlpool of molten rubies and gold beyond the Birkenfeld, while the sky to the north and east was green, with a vivid, springlike hue. The clear, thin dusk of August fell, yet the tireless columns marched on—and in company of other, even queerer way-

farers, the dusty young man with the knapsack doggedly continued to trudge beside them. When at length the halt was sounded, he staggered through a hedge-gap into a field of flax, and threw himself heavily face downwards amidst the yellowing stems that had long ago flowered, and seeded, and ripened for pulling.

Stupid with weariness, he might have lain there ten minutes, when a bugle shrilled close by, and the brown, hairy heads and forelegs of the leaders of a team of gun-horses crashed through the hedgerow, the scarlet face, open shouting mouth, and uplifted whip-arm of the fore-rider showing above. As luck would have it, orders had been given that a half-battery of mounted artillery should bivouac in this flax-field. And death under the iron-shod hoofs of the horses, and the iron-shod wheels that followed them, shaved very close to P. C. Breagh.

Yet he was not grateful as he picked himself out of the hollow into which his frog-like, instinctive leap for life had landed him. The heavy riding-whip of the fore-rider had cut him bitterly across the loins while yet in mid-air. Adding insult to injury, the artilleryman had cursed his victim for getting in the way of the battery, and the other riders and the gunners on the limber were grinning from ear to ear. Smarting, P. C. Breagh cursed back, in a cautious but vigorous whisper, as he hobbled back to the road. . . .

Upon the farther side two half-battalions of infantry, divided by a little bushy knoll, were already encamped upon a strip of gorsey grass. The thing had been done as if by magic, the officers grouped in the foreground round their little camp tables were drinking Rhine wine and beer as peacefully as though they had not stirred for hours. Behind them the battalion-colour and the halberd of the drum-major had been planted upright in the centre of an orderly array of drums and band-instruments, the straight

rows of knapsacks within rolled greatcoats, stretching away in the rear, were divided by the customary ten-pace interval, and the mathematically-balanced stacks of needle-guns.

Fires of brush and dry cones from the pine-groves fringing the road, crackled in the small oblong trenches dug by the fatigue-men. Squad-cooks were cutting up pea-sausages, raw potatoes, and onions into camp-kettles of water, destined to simmer, slung on sticks reaching from bank to bank. And the regimental butchers had already slaughtered a couple of young bullocks, whose skins lay smoking by the chopping-block. Presently, when the officers' mess-cooks had chosen such joints as seemed good to them, the rest of the meat would go to enrich the stew of the rank-and-file. Meanwhile the men, scattered to the utmost limits of the cordon of sentries, blunted the edge of hunger with black bread and the flinty brown biscuit, crowded thirstily round the beer and wine-carts, squatted in groups playing cards, chatting, or singing part-songs; wrestled and ran races, or dozed lying face downwards on the sun-burnt grass, their foreheads resting on their folded arms.

A charming scene, now that the all-pervading dust had begun to settle—the bivouac roofed in by the clear green twilight, through which diamond star-points began to thrust. If only one had been less sharp-set, and the proprietors of the wine and beer-carts had had bread and sausage to sell as well as warm, flat beer and musty-smelling vintage, the beauty would have appealed to one a good deal more.

Squatted by a lichened boulder in a clump of sun-scorched bracken, P. C. Breagh searched his pockets, and then the recesses of his knapsack, for something to eat. An ancient crust of black bread rewarded his investigations, just as the savoury-smelling camp-kettles were taken off the fires.

He fell to work upon his crust as the stew was apportioned, and the big cans of beer distributed to each mess; and as he gnawed dog-like at the stone-hard lump of baked rye-dough, he caught the eye of one of the Barmecides, a merry-faced, red-haired young private, who was evidently the jester of his squad.

"Our soup smells good, what? Well, the smell may be had for nothing. He may fill his belly with as much of that as he can!"

A roar of laughter greeted the sally of the humorist. To whom P. C. Breagh nodded assent, and, gravely extending his diminished crust in the quarter from whence the whiff of oniony pea-soup came most powerfully, fell to with apparently-renewed appetite, provoking the approving comment:

"He can take a joke! Well, then, let him take this! and this! Catch!"

A lump of very fresh beef, boiled in the oniony pea-soup, was dumped into a bit of newspaper, screwed up, and pitched across to the supperless. P. C. Breagh gratefully caught the oleaginous parcel and the two hard Army biscuits that came after, and, pulling out some small change, signified his desire to pitch back the coins in return. But a big hand waved them vigorously away, with the gruff exclamation: "*Der Teufel!* let him keep his coppers! One gives a share of one's supper—one doesn't sell!"

And so genuine was the tone that, despite the smarting weal that had been the gift of another less kindly, P. C. Breagh's faith in humanity lifted up its head.

He disposed of the grub, and drank some hill-water tinctured with Kinahan, a permissible indulgence, in view of his fatigue, and stuffed the well-used briar-root with bird's-eye, and, propping his back comfortably against the boulder, kindled the pipe of peace. By nature clubbable, and athirst for news, he would have liked to mingle with

the replete, unbuttoned soldiers, who, supper over, gathered round the fires to smoke and chat and sing. But the snub dealt by Valverden had not left off smarting; the fear of incurring another rebuff, even from a social inferior, kept him aloof and solitary. He realised with dismay that his stock of self-confidence was beginning to run low.

"I'd a lot of faith in myself when I accepted that commission from Knewbit," he ruminated, chewing hard on the stem of the venerable briar-root. "More than half his money's spent—what did I want with that revolver ?—and I haven't written him a line. Instead, I've swotted up a thundering long descriptive article, telling people all about what they know already—and sent it to that shaved sea-elephant in a Gladstone collar, who told me I might forward letters from the seat of hostilities if ever I got there !"

He frowned, mentally reviewing the points of the first-born launched upon the tide of speculation. However ancient its matter might be, the vigour and mastery of that descriptive article—completed in the train between Bingen and Mayence, and dropped with paternal solicitude into the sack of a corporal of the Field Post—would surely —could not fail to—ensure its appearance in print.

Why did a horrible conviction of its utter stodginess come home to him at this eleventh hour ? Its laboured periods revolted, its stately mawkishness sickened his memory. He knocked out the pipe-bowl against the boulder and got out his note-book and began to jot down a letter to Mr. Knewbit by the light of the now risen moon, who, with Venus blazing emerald at her opulent side, hung high in the south-east, looking down upon forest and field, mountain, valley and river, and the armed men and beasts, guns and waggon-trains, strung out over leagues of distance, calmly as befitting an aged Queen familiar with the portents of War.

She stared down so haughtily at the travel-soiled and dusty scallawag lying upon the fringe of the bivouac amongst the remnants of a meal cadged from a soldier's camp-kettle, that he caught her eye and broke his pencil-lead. No ! he couldn't write, even well enough to "please plain, homely people." . . . Why, hang it all !—Old Knewbit must have known from the beginning, to do that was the highest and most difficult art of all. Men came into the world equipped, as had come Shakespeare, and Scott, and Dickens, each with a single feather such as might belong to the wing of a Phœnix or an Archangel, sprouting from his own flesh. Urged by the inborn crave to set down Life, each had plucked forth his birth-gift with a pang of unutterable anguish, and there, at the quill-end, hung a single drop of red, red blood. And that drop tinctured every page they penned, and thus what they wrote lived. To be a distinguished War Correspondent one had to be born with the magic pen-feather. The Doctor had it. That was why his written sentences dug home to the quick. Without it, Success would never come to one, no matter how hard one tried for it. One would be nothing better all one's life than a plodding paragraphist.

Pity an unlucky youth, fagged, footsore, and smarting, not only from disillusion and chagrin, but from the very recent application of an Artillery horsewhip. In addition, the infantry band had now begun to play with soul-melting sweetness. First "The Lorelei," and then "Red Dawn That Lights Me To My Early Grave," and then the song of Siebel from "Faust"—with all its yearning passion and tender anguish. And possibly other eyes were wet besides P. C. Breagh's, who fairly put down his head and sobbed, under cover of the twilight and the protecting boulder, as he had not done since his knickerbocker days. . . . Not now from a vague, wistful aching for the voice and the

touch of the young, unknown, long-dead mother. Pain and longing were there, but of how different a kind. . . .

The reign of Brünhilde-Britomart-Isolde was over. That night saw the smallest and slenderest of heroines established on the vacant throne of the Ideal.

He who wept was not the type of a young girl's hero, choking and gulping, and burrowing his hot, wet face into the dry, rustling fern. But he suffered as only youth can suffer, the pangs were very real that wrung from him such stifled cries as these:

"Oh, God! I love her—Juliette de Bayard! . . . I have loved her since the moment our eyes met. My infernal ingratitude that she forgave like an angel!—the brutal things I thought and said of her—were because I could not forgive myself for loving her so. My discontent, my restlessness, my ambition to do something and be somebody—weren't they prompted by the longing to cut a figure in her eyes! . . . Lovely eyes;—and at this minute her husband may be kissing them!—'the noble gentleman, brave as a lion,' who fought like the deuce and all! Stop, though! If he's an Army man, he has had to leave her. Could I have borne to do that if I had had the luck to be in his shoes? Yet how she would despise a lover who hesitated between her and his duty! Even if '*her heart-strings about his heels were tied,*' as the Suabian ballad says, '*she would bid him march to war!*' For a girl like that could love, mind you! like Juliet and Desdemona and Viola rolled into one, and yet never be blinded by love into forgetfulness of God, or honour, or loyalty. It is written in her face. Are these things first with me? I'm afraid not! . . . I think not! . . . I know they're not! . . . And yet I dare to love her—to whom they mean everything!"

His conscience stung and smarted like the weal from the Artillery whip-lash. And the dread of Death and the Here-

after wakened in him, shuddering and quaking in the creeping dusk.

Now he comprehended his own insignificance and weakness and loneliness. . . . He had seen a man die that day, suddenly, without time for preparation, as thousands of others would die before the ending of this war. What if to-morrow at the hottest hour the trenchant blade of the sun should bite through P. C. Breagh's brain-pan? He heard the other self within him saying "Suppose . . . ?" And he asked himself, with a cold sweat breaking out upon his flesh, and a curious stirring among the roots of his hair, what would have happened only an hour or two back, if the flying squirrel-leap that had made the white teeth flash against the brown faces of the gunners on the limber, had failed to land the dusty scallawag who had been sleeping in the flax-field beyond reach of the pounding hoofs of the battery-team! . . .

"*Father, I cry to Thee!* . . ."

The soldiers were singing the Battle Prayer of Körner, the lusty Teutonic basses and baritones and tenors mingling in melodious unison with the night-breeze that had risen with the moon.

Previously P. C. Breagh might have smiled at the simultaneous production of hymn-books, the rising at the word of command to sing—the short, business-like edition recited by an officer, that was followed by a crashing Amen. Now, recalled by the brief act of worship to the teachings of the Mother Church, he made the sacred sign upon brow and breast, and whispered his nightly prayers. The name of Juliette mingled in the entreaty that Our Lord and His Mother would bless and guard those dear to him from danger and harm.

"And not let me come to grief for *her* sake—of course I mean Monica's! For *she* never would have loved me even if there hadn't been another man. But O! take care of

her, and shield her from evil, sickness, grief, and danger. And let me see her again one day!"

He grew drowsy, lying against the yet sun-warm boulder, listening to the distant cry of the mousing owl, and the long rattling *chur'r'r!* of the nightjar, mingled with the occasional snorting of the tethered horses, the measured tramp of the sentries,—the small explosions made by pine-cones thrown upon the blazing guard-fires, and the other sounds of the bivouac.

XXXVIII.

The watch was set at nine o'clock. Then the "Lie Down" sounded far and near, and the moon stared down on rows of prone men wrapped in their greatcoats and pillowed on their knapsacks, stretching away under the pansy-dark canopy of heaven, for miles.

The officers sat for some time longer, drinking their Rhine wine and playing cards by moonshine and lantern-light, or strolling, cigar in mouth, upon the outskirts of the bivouac. Several Artillery-officers, who had supped with them, went back to their own bivouac after voluble leave-takings. Infantry-officers, who had shared the hospitality of the gunners, returned, enlivening the night with scraps of gossip, and more or less melodious song.

A couple of these late-comers halted on the outskirts of the cordon of sentries to finish a confidential conversation. The moon was obscured by clouds, the bivouac was swathed in shadow. Of the lumpy boulder by which the Adjutant stood, only its shape could be discerned against the dusty-pale grass by the dust-white road.

Said the Adjutant to the senior Captain, and the excellent cigar he was smoking smelt pleasantly in the dark:

"One can't call yesterday's a big battle, but at the same time it was a tolerably serious engagement."

The senior Captain snorted.

"*Donnerwetter!* one would think so. Nearly fifteen hundred prisoners, and Douay's Division obliged to abandon its camp and baggage. The Crown Prince has begun well—one expected no less!"

Said the Adjutant:

"I shall advise the Herr Colonel to announce the news to the regiment at roll-call to-morrow. It will make a good moral impression upon those who are new to Active Service, when they realise that the French have been trounced!"

We know what had happened. Before midday the Crown Prince had pounded Douay's Division into brickbats, the brave General himself was dead, the town of Wissembourg had fallen; by two o'clock the mitrailleuse-batteries on the Geisburg had been silenced, and the Chateau stormed and won.

The men of the Imperial Army of France in Alsace had fought magnificently. Red-capped, swarthy Turcos in baggy white breeches, Zouaves and French infantrymen, light blue Bavarian and dark blue Prussian uniforms, with what had been brave men inside them, lay scattered amongst the hop-gardens and vineyards on the mountain-side.

Of these latter no doubt the Adjutant was thinking when he threw away his cigar-butt and said:

"*Kreuzdonnerwetter!* one does not win victories for nothing. It must have been a bloody fight, and especially in the streets; you understand me? The French fired from the windows, and from the roofs of the houses. . . . There was a terrible struggle at the point of the bayonet, and both sides used the butt—liberally!"

"The butt may be brutal," commented the senior Captain, clearing his throat and expectorating copiously; "but all the same it is a hellishly useful thing!"

"Why leave your enemy brains when he may live to

plan your defeat by the use of them ?" agreed the Adjutant. The scabbard of his sword clinked, as he moved, against the boulder, and the sound made an eavesdropper go goose-fleshy all over, as he lay prone amongst dry bents and bracken in the blackness on the farther side. Then he heard the Captain ask:

" Did the Crown Prince continue the advance to-day ?" and strained his ears for the Staff officer's reply.

" Undoubtedly ! Moltke's telegram from the King's Headquarters at Mayence ran: ' *Seek out and fight the enemy wherever you may find him,*' and Marshal MacMahon is said to be concentrating all his forces on a high plateau between Froeschwiller and Eberbach, west of the Sauer and the Sulz. The bridges have been broken—his position is an exceptionally strong one. . . . Of course you know the kind of ground !"

" Open ground," snorted the Captain, " over which an assailant must pass to get at him. *Sapperlot !* don't I wish I'd had the chance to-day !"

" You are too greedy, Scheren," joked the Adjutant. " Ts't ! What was that ?"

Both men were silent, intently listening. For the eavesdropper, titillated to madness by a spear of seed-grass that had thrust up a nostril, had given a smothered sneeze. Now on the point of discovery, he found presence of mind sufficient to repeat the sneeze, panting doggishly, whining and scratching amongst the fern. . . .

The ruse was successful. The Adjutant said, laughingly:

" It's a dog, nosing at a rat or rabbit-hole. Under-Lieutenant Brand's terrier ' Nagler,' perhaps."

" Hie, then, boy !"

" Here, Nagler !"

The Captain whistled, the other man advised indifferently:

" Let the brute alone—perhaps the rabbit's a French

one !" He added, " It would be amusing to read a dog's impressions of the campaign. What time is it ? ' Ten !' Very well, I shall go and turn in. You'll do the same thing, if you'll take my advice."

The Captain grunted assent, and the two officers clanked away together, while P. C. Breagh noiselessly collected his venerable waterproof, his water-bottle, and knapsack, and departed in search of a more distant sleeping-place.

But when he found it in a dry ditch a quarter-of-a-mile below the Mounted Artillery bivouac, and stretched himself out to sleep, he could not. . . . His head rang with the news that would presently thrill the civilised world.

First blood to Germany. . . . Did the Doctor know ? . . .

That genial little gentleman had prophesied accurately. The " meaty bone " of early and accurate information had fallen to the " tyke at the tail of the Army Corps." While the prophet, delayed by pumped-out horses and recalcitrant grooms, at the Lion Inn of Neustadt, knew no more than that the heir to the Prussian Crown was over the frontier, and was reported to have taken Wissembourg from the French.

That dry ditch accommodated a complacent lodger. His misgivings banished by one stroke of fortune, P. C. Breagh brooded sleeplessly over the Koh-i-noor that had fallen to him. . . . Though, to hold such a jewel and know oneself impotent to use it, that was the verjuice mingled in the cup of bliss.

Without funds for telegraphing—an Editor to print one's letters—and a public ready to read, what was the use of information ? Stop ! What was that the more authoritative of the two officers had said ?—the one who had given the news to the other man ? " *It would be amusing to read a dog's impressions of the campaign ! . . .*"

Would it ? Such a dog, perhaps, as the mongrel that had joined the green-jacketed Saxon infantry regiment at Bingen. The cur the compassionate soldier had christened "Bang." Lying on his back, pillowed on his knapsack, staring at the waning moon, the boy pondered. Suppose one wrote one's letters to Knewbit in the assumed character of Bang ?

The idea grew, and he sat up to review its possibilities. Something soft and feathery brushed past his ear as he stirred. An owlet, most likely, yet I prefer to believe that it may have been the wing of Inspiration, touching the head destined to be crowned by Fame.

"Pages from the Diary of 'Bang,' the Battalion Dog." That should be the title, or simply, "The Story of 'Bang.'" "Short and to the point," he heard Mr. Knewbit saying. And Knewbit . . .

Here was day ! . . .

Reveille after reveille sounded, shattering his train of thought, waking the hilly echoes. Under how strange a sky the bugles clamoured, the bivouac stopped snoring; men sat up on dew-wet great-coats and rubbed their eyes.

The cup of heaven was red as though brimmed with blood new-drained from the veins of heroes. In the leftward quarter looking East, Ursa Major swam in blood, blazing with white-hot fierceness. On the ensanguined South the Dog cowered as though in terror. And like a skeleton arm, the Milky Way pointed over the blood-dabbled hill-crests and the blood-tipped pine-groves from the south-east, West. . . .

Men's faces and hands were crimsoned by reflections cast from that portentous sunrise, the dew-wet grasses were dyed the same hue.

They broke their fast on their black bread washed down with bitter black coffee. In the pause that followed the

roll-call, a voice spoke. And amidst deafening cheers the news sprang from bearded lip to lip.

"Lucky is the standard that flies over the first-fought field!" says the proverb.

And there is no tonic that strings the nerves and braces the muscles like the first draught of the strong wine of Success.

At Mayence, Moltke had commented to his Sovereign, with his keen old eyes twinkling with joy:

"Douay's troops were preparing their evening coffee when the Prince with his four Divisions appeared on the heights above Schweigen. The Red Breeches thought it was a *promenade militaire* in the Second Empire style, until the shells began to plop into their cooking-pots!"

"Thanks be to Heaven!" returned King William piously, "our artillery-fire has improved since the Bohemian campaign."

"All the same," returned the Warlock, shaking the wise old head cased in the auburn scratch-wig, "their musketry should do much for the French. For the chassepôt is quicker in loading than our needle-gun, and spits less, which is better for the aim. . . . Then our needle-gun had a poor trajectory at 500 yards, and wounds rather than kills outright. While the chassepôt bullet,—driven by its huge charge of powder—has a splendidly flat trajectory, and flattening out, makes a magnificent wound! In at the chest—out at the shoulder-blades! . . . The man has a hole in him you can see the landscape through!"

And he rubbed his withered hands, the old specialist in slaughter. Whilst Bismarck said, laughing, to his cousin and military *attaché*:

"The enthusiast forgets that the perforated examples will be German. . . . Look at him! Already he begins

to resemble a bird of prey. Have you read these Paris newspapers ? The King has laughed heartily over them, but they must horribly irritate the Emperor. Listen to this, from the *Constitutionnel* : ' *Prussia continues to insult us with impunity, when the Armies of the Empire, at a word from their Chief, might descend like three crashing avalanches upon the hosts of Germany. Why is the word not uttered ? Why is the massacre—with the rout that must inevitably follow, delayed for a single hour ?*' "

The Emperor had perused the leaders, in his headquarters at the Prefecture at Metz. His eyes seemed opaque as clouded glass, his face was a puffy mask, devoid of expression, as he replied to the hinted condolences of a sycophant upon his staff.

" The opinions of these gentlemen of the Press were not solicited. They are free to criticise me, let them do so. I am not bound to divulge to them my plans."

Alas ! vacillation, hesitation, and delay on the part of the Imperial Commander-in-Chief fatally clogged the movements of his magnificent Army. He did not put in an appearance with his Staff at headquarters until a fortnight subsequently to the Declaration of War. A week later—and no Plan of Campaign had been issued to his generals. True, he had demolished with field-fire, a beer-shop at Saarbrück. He had paraded on the hills with Frossard's Army Corps. He had witnessed the evacuation of the town by its garrison—had withdrawn his advanced-posts and gone home to Metz to dine and telegraph to Paris of the " capture of the heights " and the " short resistance of the Prussians ";—to tell of the cannon-balls and bullets which fell at his own feet, and those of the Prince Imperial, " who showed admirable coolness." " Some of the soldiers wept," he adds, " beholding him so calm. . . ."

And indeed, though one takes the soldiers' tears with a grain of salt, the spirited bearing of the boy must have

cheered the sick heart of his father, and yet thrust another dagger in it, too.

Had the Imperial Commander-in-Chief any plan, one wonders. . . . Long after he had ceased to be Emperor, a pamphlet was published at Brussels, which is generally accepted as the work of the pen that signed the Capitulation of Sedan.

"*To Marshals MacMahon and Lebœuf alone, the Emperor had entrusted his scheme of warfare. His purpose was—to mass* 150,000 *troops at Metz,* 100,000 *at Strasbourg, and* 50,000 *at the Camp of Châlons. The concentration of the first two armies—one on the Sarre, and the other on the Rhine —did not reveal the purpose of the Imperial Commander-in-Chief, for the enemy would be left in uncertainty as to whether the attack would be made against the Rhenish Provinces or the Duchy of Baden.*"

Would the Warlock have long remained in uncertainty ? But hear the pamphleteer:

"*As soon as the troops should have been concentrated at the points indicated, it was the Emperor's purpose to instantly unite the armies of Metz and Strasbourg ; and at the head of* 250,000 *men, to cross the Rhine at Maxau, compel the Southern States of Germany to observe neutrality, and hasten to encounter the Army of Prussia.*" Later on occurs the pathetic complaint: "*If one could only know beforehand, exactly where the enemy was, one's plans would be easy to carry out !*"

Indeed, the dispositions of Moltke were made with baffling secrecy. Even as the Heathen Chinee accommodated card-packs innumerable in his ample sleeves, so the Warlock hid the twelve Army Corps of the North German Confederation, with the Prussian Guard Corps, the Bavarian Field Army and the Würtemberg and Baden Divisions, in the skirts of his military cloak. . . . When the moment came, the aged conjuror twitched open the garment and

showed them: Steinmetz with the First Army at Tréves, Prince Frederick Charles with the Second at Mayence, the Crown Prince with the Third, at Landau.

When the Three Armies rolled on, the art of the strategist covered their movements with a baffling veil of cavalry. A day's march ahead of the Army Corps' advanced-guards, Divisions of Uhlans, Dragoons and Hussars—(in a little all were "Uhlans" to the terrified French peasants)—provided for the security of the huge infantry bivouacs behind them; made requisitions for provisions, fuel, and forage; burned farms and cottages of resisting property-owners; seized the funds at banks and post-offices; rendered railways and telegraphs useless—scouted for the French positions—took prisoner or shot despatch-bearers and patrol-riders — harassed marches, and boldly fired into camps. Many fell in forays, or skirmishes, many were those accounted for by the long-range hitting chassepôt, which was heartily detested by Prussia's mounted men.

"If I had not been called to Metz to attend an Imperial War-Council," Marshal MacMahon is reported to have said bitterly, when the news of the defeat of Wissembourg reached him, "this blow upon the south would not have fallen. My Second Division would still be left to guard the opening between the Vosges and the Rhine."

The thunder of the guns of Wörth add their comment upon that utterance.

Over the head of the town, lying at the bottom of a fertile valley patched with hop-gardens and vineyards, and threaded by a river, was waged between the Marshal with 50,000 troops, the pick and flower of the French Army, and "Unser Fritz" with twice the number of men, a desperate and bloody fight.

The French on the bluffy wooded cliffs that are the foothills of the Vosges, occupied, as strategists have declared,

an almost unassailable position. But the fire of the mitrailleuses was hampered by the artillery of the 2nd Bavarians under Hartmann, that seasoned veteran, who had fought at Waterloo in 1815 and now led an Army Corps against France in his seventy-sixth year. Thus the Prussian infantry crossed the Sauerbach on bridges improvised of planks and hop-poles; and though the chassepôt proved an infinitely deadlier weapon than the needle-gun, and the French troops, fighting with magnificent bravery, twice recaptured the town from their foes, the generalship of Von Kirchbach and Von der Tann,—in command of the Prussian 4th Division and 5th Corps, backed by a Division of the 11th Corps,—forced MacMahon's hand.

Outnumbered, outflanked, and disorganized, with the loss of 9,000 men killed, 5,000 taken prisoners, twenty pieces of artillery, six mitrailleuses, and two eagles, the Marshal fled by the way of Zabern, under cover of night, trailing after him the beaten remnant of the Army of Strasbourg.

The Third Army of Germany had lost 489 officers and 10,153 rank and file. Before night of the 7th the dead were buried in great trenches, the columns of the Society of the Red Cross, the Sisters of Mercy and Lutheran Deaconesses, with surgeons, volunteers, and Army ambulance-bearers, had cleared the wounded from the field.

"Ah! if we had only had this sort of thing at the Alma and at Inkerman!" a grizzled Zouave sapper growled to one of the ladies of the Red Cross. "I was wounded there —sacred name of a pipe! My belt-buckle was carried by a shell-splinter through my *ceinture* into my stomach. This very buckle, look you, that I wear to-day!" He added, rubbing the locality of the previous casualty: "There is nothing inside there now, because of late they have not fed us, or our chassepôts. How the devil can men kill Prussians without soup in their bellies or cartridges in their guns?"

The Zouave spoke truth. It was a half-equipped and under-rationed army that had made such a splendid show at Froeschwiller. It was a starving, demoralised remnant that surged and weltered through the passes of the Vosges at MacMahon's flying heels. Cavalry on foot, Zouaves riding Artillery-horses, mitrailleuse corps without mitrailleuses, baggage-waggons crowded with men of a dozen different regiments, went clanking and jolting over the roads that were littered with discarded chassepôts, bearing witness to the pitiable, ghastly disorder of the retreat.

The hour of their defeat had seen Frossard's Army Corps, holding with Forton's cavalry brigade the heights over Saarbrück, simultaneously attacked by the 7th and 8th Corps of Unser Fritz's army, and driven back in confusion and with slaughter, towards Metz.

XXXIX.

The huge peacock-bubble of the Third Empire was pricked and leaking in good earnest. Thenceforward it was to shrink, and pale, and dwindle to its inglorious end.

The Emperor must have known its days were numbered, when those wires of the 6th reached him. On the 7th the news of Wörth electrified Paris. Can you hear Jules Ferry joyfully exclaiming to the father of Paul Déroulède, "The armies of the Third Napoleon are annihilated! At last there dawns a day of hope for France!" But fierce, triumphant voices like these were drowned in the muffled sobs of mothers, and the moans of wives made widows, and the wailing of children now fatherless. Later, and as though to enhance the bitterness of defeat, lying telegrams were published in Paris, announcing that the Duke of Magenta had retaken Wissembourg, captured sixty guns, and made 25,000 prisoners. Chief among these unlucky

ones figured the Prussian Crown Prince, who in an access of despair had shot himself. . . .

For some hours the streets and boulevards were packed with rejoicing multitudes. Cries of "*Vive l'Empereur,*" scarce at this era as snowflakes in summer, were suddenly heard again. Flags and Chinese lanterns were displayed from every window, the people stopped the hansom-cab in which the famous Opera tenor Capoul was being driven along the Place de la Bourse, and, hoisting their idol to the top of a stationary omnibus, compelled him to chant the "*Marseillaise.*"

When the Emperor's sorrowful despatches of the 7th revealed the cruel truth, and proclamations signed by the Empress and the Ministers made it public, rapture gave place to frenzy of the wildest. Troops of cuirassiers and mounted Gardes de Paris,—bands of National Guards,—companies of the Line, and Marines were employed to clear the Rue de la Paix, and the Places de l'Opera and Vendome, of rioters.

The Chambers assembled amidst tumult indescribable. Ministers were insulted on their way to attend the deliberations. "*À la Frontiere!*" cried the huge crowd, thronging the quay before the Palace of the Corps Législatif. "*Vive Rochefort!*" "*À bas les Ministres!*" "*Chassepôts!*"

Their reiterated demands for arms could be heard within the Chamber. Where, when M. Schneider mounted the tribune to read the Imperial Decree of Convocation, the opening formula: "Napoleon, by the Grace of God and the national will, Emperor of the French," was vigorously howled down. Ollivier, the unpopular Head of the Imperial Cabinet, who had egged on the war, fared no better. Later, the fall of his Ministry was greeted with salvo upon salvo of enthusiastic applause, and when the news was published, all Paris went mad once more with joy.

While the moment of supreme collapse of the great pea-

cock bubble was coming nearer, the Crown Prince of Prussia was hunting MacMahon through the defiles of the Vosges, his flying cavalry snapping up scores of wounded or foot-sore stragglers, his advance-batteries of light artillery harassing the bleeding flanks of the fugitive. The Second and First Armies were moving Metzwards, the Warlock having knowledge that the Emperor's main Army, the Imperial Guard, and Bazaine's, Ladmirault's and Frossard's Corps, with part of Canrobert's, were concentrating there.

The Great Bubble was sagging pitifully. The weather was wet and chilly, the Imperial troops not yet in action were disheartened by the news of battles lost. Their equipment was incomplete, their new boots had proved to be of no better material than brown paper and American cloth. Worst of all, the Commissariat, always inadequate, showed signs of caving in. And the blame for all was heaped upon the shoulders of the Emperor, whose faith in his fortunate star had quite deserted him; a man tormented by telegrams of wifely censure and wifely advice from Paris; disgruntled, if ever man was; haunted and oppressed by premonitions of impending disaster; sleepless, shaky, sick, and prematurely old.

The taking of the fortresses of Bitche and Phalsbourg—memorable by reason of its brave Governor's resolute defence—the seizure of the undefended City of Nancy, the Zorn Valley railway line, Forbach with its immense military stores, Sarreguemines, and other garrison towns were lesser shocks, falling on a mind already paralysed. Hasty decisions, contradictory orders, had emanated, one after another from the Headquarters. He was confused and flurried, finding his good brother of Prussia so near. For the Warlock, scenting a movement of French troops to the rear, had crowned the uplands eastward of Metz with the 1st and 7th Corps of the First Army of Germany under the veteran General Steinmetz, cavalry well to the fore and outposts

skilfully posted, so as to look into the French position from all points of view, while the Red Prince felt for a solid footing for his Second Army on the left or French bank of the Moselle. Meanwhile, the Crown Prince, whose clutches Marshal MacMahon had evaded by taking a vast circuit to Chalons, had swept round and was marching northwards from Vigneulles towards Metz.

Ah ! in what a hornet's nest the Imperial Commander-in-Chief found himself. Almost incapable of mental effort, he recognised, like Mr. Wilkins Micawber,—whose epistolary style is occasionally suggested by his Proclamations and harangues,—that something had to be done at once. To shake off the intolerable burden of authority was the most urgent necessity. He transferred it to the youngest of his Marshals, Bazaine.

"You will get us out of this, won't you, Marshal ?" cried an officer of the Imperial Staff, as the new Commander-in-Chief came out of the Prefecture.

The Marshal had left his master in bed, expecting answers to letters he had penned to the Emperor of Austria and the King of Italy, soliciting aid and alliance, which these potentates did not bestow. True to himself, he could not quit Metz without a proclamation, penned in the old flourishing, ambiguous style:

"Inhabitants of Metz. In leaving you to oppose the invading enemy, I rely upon your patriotism to defend this great city. You will not allow the foreigner to seize this bulwark of France, and you will emulate the Army in courage and devotion. . . . I hope to return in happier times to thank you for your noble conduct."

Then he quitted the place with his son, his cousin and his personal following and escort. As his *cortège* clattered through the streets, choked with soldiers, guns, provision-carts and baggage-waggons, and faces of contempt, or derision, or hatred turned to see, did he hide his own sick,

humiliated face behind the green silk screen of the carriage window. How did he answer the inevitable questions of his son ?

A prey to hideous uncertainties, for the new Commander-in-Chief had suddenly applied to be superseded, this luckless Emperor spent the night at the camp at Longeville, waking upon a foggy morning—if he could be said to sleep, who never slept—to a salute of Prussian artillery. For a patrol of Uhlans with a half-battery of field-guns had made, during the night, a bold attempt to seize upon the Imperial person, and being foiled within an ace of success, had retreated, plumping a shell or so into the lines from the German side of the river. And while these hornets were being repulsed with heavy metal, the muddy, travel-stained Army of the Red Prince crossed the river lower down; the episode described having diverted attention from their transit; effected, even as in a jam of batteries, battalions, squadrons, baggage and ammunition-trains, the French retreat was being made.

So choked were the roads that the Emperor and his suite with the Imperial Guard Escort only managed to struggle as far as Gravelotte, a village some eight miles from Metz, where Bazaine had his headquarters:

" Gentlemen, we will remain here, but keep the baggage packed !" had been the Emperor's instructions to his following upon alighting at the inn, where two miserable bedrooms were with difficulty obtained for himself and his son. Prince Napoleon and the other personages of the suite found harbourage at various cottages; the lackeys slept in the baggage-fourgons, it may be hazarded. For in the morning these vehicles and their attendants were found to have disappeared. They had departed for Verdun, whither their master was now to follow them. Bazaine, who could not shuffle off his now detested responsibilities, was summoned, to find the Imperial carriage standing in readiness before the tavern door.

XL.

One can see the splendid bays, champing their bits of solid silver, their sleek skins and their costly harness glittering in the sunshine that had driven the early morning fogs away, the postilions and outriders in their green and gold liveries sitting in the saddle, the landaus of the suite drawn up at the distance prescribed by etiquette.

Everybody was breakfastless, save the Emperor, his son, and cousin, and their immediate following. The regiment of Chasseurs d'Afrique, the gorgeous Cent Gardes in gold-crested, crimson-tufted, silver helmets with flowing white horsetails, and caped cloaks of azure, were empty of all but air, like their own famous kettledrums. Their horses had cropped a little grass in the fields during the night's bivouac, and were better off than their riders, by one meal.

The young Prince Imperial looked sulky and discontented, but neat and soldier-like in his new uniform of a subaltern officer of infantry. . . . Prince Napoleon, the portly M. Plon-Plon of the Crimean War caricatures, wore a cocked hat pulled down hard over his eyes, and was buttoned up in a military cloak.

The Emperor had suffered in the night, for a traveller who had slept in an attic above his bedroom had heard him pacing to and fro and groaning. He wore a black-caped, red-lined waterproof cloak over the uniform of a General of Division; a glimpse of the Star of the Legion of Honour fastened on his breast, showed as he raised his hand to throw away the butt of the inseparable cigarette, and set his neat little polished gold-spurred boot on the carriage-step, and beckoned with a small white-kid-gloved hand.

Obeying this signal, a green-and-gold equerry and a demure elderly valet hoisted him respectfully on one side, whilst a keen-eyed, lean-jawed young man, accurately

attired in deep black, propped him scientifically upon the other. We know this deft and silent personage to have been a brilliant young Paris surgeon, retained about the person of the Emperor; a specialist whose ministrations, in dulling unbearable pain with subcutaneous injections of morphia, and combating the progress of disease by skilled surgical treatment, became more necessary every day.

They got him in. The sweat was starting through the rouge upon his livid face as he sank heavily upon the seat of the carriage. His son and cousin followed. Bazaine,—who was accompanied by Canrobert and Bourbaki, and did not dismount, rode up to receive his master's farewells.

He did not entreat again to be relieved of the supreme responsibility. Perhaps the Emperor imagined that he might. For he put out his hand in haste and shook the Marshal's, reiterating:

"All will go well! Excellently, I have no doubt of it! You understand, you have broken the spell."

Of ill-luck, did he mean, clinging to the fatalist whose Star was on the point of setting. He added:

"I go to Verdun and Chalons. Put yourself upon the road for Chalons as soon as possible. . . . May you be fortunate! *Au revoir! En avant!*"

The brigadier-general in charge of the escort gave the word. The Advance was sounded, the Chasseurs on their grey Arabs dashed onwards, riding in fours, keeping a sharp lookout for Uhlans. A half-troop of Cent Gardes preceded the Emperor's carriage, his equerries and aides and those of the Prince's household followed on their empty, chafing beasts. Another *peloton* of Cent Gardes were succeeded by three Imperial carriages containing the surgeon, secretaries, and valets, grooms followed with led horses, and the Empress's regiment of Dragoons, brass-helmeted, black-plumed warriors, in green with white plastrons, brought up the rear.

It was four o'clock in the morning when they started. Deep defiles rather than roads, with wooded, precipitous banks, stretch between Metz and Gravelotte. By the time the Imperial *cortège* had extricated itself from the stray columns and batteries choking these, and the cliffy banks had lowered to hedgerows, it was six o'clock and a gloriously sunny morning.

One may imagine, as the landscape broadened and smoothed like a human face relieved from carking anxiety, the young Prince Imperial turning in his seat, and looking back upon the scene he was unwillingly quitting, with a scowl of resentment and dissatisfaction that changed and aged his boyish face.

He saw the white tents of the huge camps of the Imperial Divisions snowing over a vast area of country on the French side of the river, and the clotting of cavalry and infantry in swarms upon the roads, where vast aggregations of baggage and provision and ambulance-waggons impeded their passage. He saw the Imperial Standard break out above the Tricolour on the flagstaff of the Fort of Plappeville, signifying that Bazaine had entered. He could see the artillery-batteries on the high ground at Rezerieulles, and he knew that others were posted behind the woods of Genivaux, and yet others near the quarries of Amanvilliers. The glitter of steel and the flutter of red and white lance-pennons told of the Light Cavalry outposts at St. Ruffine. And sinister moving specks upon the hill-crests beyond the river above St. Barbe—and others moving in the villages, with darker, bigger patches towards Sarrebourg, testified, like the gray-white drifts of powder-smoke that came down upon the north-east breeze,—with the reduplicated rattle of musketry, the detonation of field-guns and the yapping of mitrailleuses—to the near, active presence of the ancient, racial foe.

He was drawing nearer, always nearer, to the coveted

key-city of the Two Rivers, seated within her ancient fortifications, guarding the north-east frontiers of France. *He* wanted Metz, with her vast modern arsenal, her huge hospitals and military colleges, her fifteen bridges—(the railway-bridge had been blown up by Bazaine's engineers on the night before last, when that squadron of Uhlans, under cover of darkness, had made their way into the French lines, with the project of seizing upon the person of papa)—and her glorious Cathedral, whose vast grey bulk was now bathed in the misty golden sunshine of a perfect autumn day.

Soon, soon, those legions of dark blue soldiers would be at grips with Frenchmen for the possession of Metz. Oh! not to be able to fire a shot, or strike a blow with her defenders, because of one's pitiable weakness and youth! Oh! to be perpetually guarded and protected and plucked from the very possibility of danger, because one happened to be Heir to the Imperial Throne.

Why had the Emperor resigned the supreme command of the Army? There had been reverses—does a Commander-in-Chief give up for that? True, he was not well, but the First Napoleon had fought battles and won them, in spite of cramps and colic. *He* would never have driven away under the noses of King William and Count Bismarck and the Prince Commanders. He would have called the nephew who could commit such an *impair* as that a *godichon*. He would have said: "To the devil with you, who boast yourself of my blood! A Napoleon—and not a general! You might have proved yourself a fighter, at least!"

The soldiers regarded the Emperor's resignation as the Great Napoleon would have done. They had not cried "*Vive l'Empéreur!*" when papa had driven out of Metz. Upon the contrary, they had maintained silence, scowling or sneering covertly. To-day, the meanest *piou-piou* had

presumed to wink or grin. More, voices from the depths of company-columns had called out horrible insults; things that had made the son's teeth set and his fists clench with the passionate desire to thrash the offenders, yet had not twitched one muscle in the father's impassive face. . . .

"Why do you look back so often, Louis? What are you thinking about?"

The Emperor's question brought the young head round. He muttered, twisting the gold knot of his little sword:

"I am looking at the Army, and at Metz—and at those Uhlan outposts. And I want to know why we are going away—just because the Prussians are coming? Why cannot we stay—and fight?"

The diplomatic, evasive answer came:

"Because for the present it is more prudent that we should withdraw ourselves."

The boy shrugged, almost imperceptibly, and his young face took on an expression of heavy obstinacy, bringing out quite startlingly, a resemblance to the sire. He muttered:

"All very well. . . . But it isn't nice to—absquatulate!"

The slang term *filer* might be rendered as above. The Emperor's gray face with the patches of rouge on the flaccid cheeks moved not a muscle. Turning his hunched shoulders upon the scene of his horrible humiliations, he stared with fixed eyes along the road to Verdun, stretching away to the west between its bordering poplars, whose long blue shadows—the day being yet young—barred the white dust rather suggestively.

At Etain, where the Imperial party halted for breakfast, the Prince had a much nearer view of those ubiquitous horsemen in the dark blue uniforms. Indeed, the Emperor and his suite barely escaped a surprise, and the escort of Cent Gardes, who were here replaced by some of MacMahon's

Chasseurs d'Afrique, were hotly chased and sniped at on their way back to camp.

Through the journey of that night, performed on the cushionless plank seats of a third-class carriage, his suite being accommodated in a string of cattle-trucks, of what did the sleepless Emperor think ? What questions occupied that sick and sluggish brain ?

The question of returning to Paris, the refuge he longed for and yet dreaded inexpressibly. The question as to whether the Empress Regent would welcome the Emperor who could no longer rule the State, and what kind of ovation the people would extend to the General who had deserted the Army of Metz before the advancing hordes of United Germany ?

Would not Rebellion, Anarchy and Revolution rear up their hydra-heads to greet the Third Napoleon, re-entering his capital ? Would his reign end in the explosion of a bomb, and a shower of torn flesh and scattered blood upon the paving-stones ? Would his son ever wear the Imperial crown, won by bribery, bloodshed, fraud and trickery ? Would the Church forgive the rape of temporal power ? Would Heaven succour one who had defrauded Her ? Was this the beginning of the end ?

Lugubrious doubts like these and many others haunted his sleepless pillow in the Imperial pavilion of the camp on the dusty plains of Champagne. Dismantled at the close of the October manœuvres, and now hastily prepared for the Emperor's reception, the place was damp, dismal, and cheerless, as such places usually are.

The newly-levied troops were showing signs of insubordination; the Gardes Mobiles from Paris were in open mutiny against their generals. The great camp was a wasp's nest, which the presence of the Emperior stirred to frenzy; the lewd songs in which he figured, the yells of savage laughter greeting obscene jests levelled at him and his, reached him,

pacing the mildewed carpets underneath the damp-stained draperies festooned from the claws of Imperial eagles, whose gilding was tarnished and discoloured, like the Imperial central crown.

All night he paced, on thorns. With the dawn of day he had the answer to his questions. From the Empress, who wished him to abdicate that she might reign for her son; from the new War Minister, a creature of his own aggrandising, who by influencing the Empress, who detested him, dreamed of becoming another Richelieu. From the Prefect of Police—who indeed brought the warning in person—came a triple sentence of exile for the sick, dejected man.

Spewed forth again upon the road towards the northern frontier, he was a clog upon the feet of the army that might, by a movement in which boldness combined with rapidity, have relieved Bazaine at the critical moment and changed the fate of France. Thenceforth he was to be a passive witness, rather than a participator, in scene after scene of horrible disaster; disgraces, disillusions, defeats, crowding one upon the other, to be crowned by the unspeakable catastrophe of Sedan.

XLI.

THREE hours after the Emperor had driven out of Gravelotte the Red Prince had blocked the direct road to Verdun. The First Army had crossed the Moselle. Moltke and the Royal Headquarter Staff were already at Pont à Mousson, the Crown Prince was marching towards Chalons.

At this stage of the game, the Warlock gave the signal. Von Redern's guns opened suddenly on the French cavalry camp near Vionville. You remember the squadrons were watering: Murat's Dragoons stampeded with their baggage-trains, De Gramont's troopers sent in a volley of carbine-fire, mounted and retired in less haste. This was the open-

ing figure of the three days of bloody conflict waged in the rural tract between the northern edges of the Bois de Vaux and the Forest of Jaumont. The French call it the " Battle of St. Privat," the Germans the battle of Gravelotte-St. Privat.

The Great Headquarters of the Prussian Commander-in-Chief were at the riverside town of Pont à Mousson, some ten miles distant from the war-theatre—whose stage occupied some six square miles of undulating, wooded, ravine-gashed country-side.

And here, his possessing genius, or demon, prompting him, the tactics of Moltke abruptly changed.

I have fancied the Warlock getting up at cockcrow on the day of Vionville,—he had a little folding camp-bed he always slept upon. Undressed to shirt and drawers, he would roll himself in a gray-striped blanket which did not reveal the fact when it needed washing, and cover himself on chilly nights with a big, shabby, military cloak.

Beside the bed, with the extinguished candle-lantern standing on a corner of it, was the little portable campaign-table, covered with faded green baize. His maps were spread on this, and an Army revolver of large calibre lay atop of them, well within reach of its owner's practised hand.

He sponged his old face and sinewy neck economically in a basin of cold water, carefully washed his hands, rinsed his mouth and put on a clean white shirt. A white drill waistcoat went on under the old red-faced uniform frock, with the distinctive shoulder-cords of Chieftaincy of the Great General Staff, and the Order of Merit dangling from the silver-gilt swivel at the collar. Then he polished his bald head with his silk handkerchief, reached his wig from the chest of drawers and assumed it, read a text in his Lutheran Bible, prayed a twenty-second prayer standing: lighted a thin, dry, ginger-coloured cigar, such as his soul loved, and sat down to work at his maps.

Bismarck might well have likened him to some bird of the predatory species. With the rising furrows of his bald brow hitching up his wig, and his clear eyes, lashless with old age, crimson-rimmed by dint of fatigue and overstrain, his fierce hooked beak following the journey of his withered claw over the tough cartridge-paper—one can imagine him very like an eagle, or a member of the vulture-tribe.

It grew lighter as he worked with his old chronometer and well-used compasses and stumpy pencils; and the little thumbed table of distance-measures to which he sometimes referred. He finished and rang his handbell for his orderly-servant; chatted with his Adjutant and secretary as he broke his fast on bread and black coffee. Then at a great jingling of cavalry bridles and stamping of iron hoofs upon the cobble-stones below, he went down, carrying his rolled map-case, mounted, and rode away with his following.

The sun rising had found him, lean, inscrutable and silent, on the ridge above Flavigny, where he had told Prince Charles and Steinmetz, Moltke would be found that day. . . .

He had met and primed them with the result of his calculations, and had seen a fierce engagement from his coign of observation. By three noon, he was back at Pont à Mousson, had interviewed the King, dined frugally, and now stood chatting with the Iron Chancellor upon the steps of the Mairie.

Guns were muttering in the distance as they had done all day at intervals. There had been fighting, he answered mildly when questioned. Quite a considerable battle one might call it. The villages of Flavigny and Vionville were burning as he spoke.

The potato-gardens of Flauville were thick-strewn with corpses of French and German foot-soldiers. In a little, layer upon layer of dead and dying men and horses had been piled upon these. Necessity knows no law; and it had been found necessary to interpose Prussian cavalry between the

deadly French Artillery and exhausted masses of German infantry. Which accounted for a considerable thinning in the ranks of Rauch's Hussars.

The sacrifice had been necessary. He told himself so as he stood there smoking. His high forehead was unclouded as he returned in answer to some reference to MacMahon's losses at Wörth:

" It is one of the traditions handed down from the days of Murat and Kellermann and Lassalle—the French belief in the virtue of the massed cavalry-charge. . . ."

The Minister to whom he spoke replied:

" The English exploded the theory at Balaklava sixteen years ago, by their magnificent but useless sacrifice of Cardigan's Light Brigade. They learned then, and we have profited by the lesson that MacMahon has just been spanked for forgetting—and that Your Excellency will presently teach Bazaine. . . ."

The great strategist cupped his long chin in his lean hand, and said in his dry, thoughtful way:

" Yes, yes. We will drub this precept into his brain at cost of his breeches. *Regiments of mounted men serve admirably for the protection of marching Army Corps—are priceless for reconnaissance, outpost and patrol-work, but when they are thrown against vast bodies of troops armed with the modern breech-loader, their use is unjustifiable, being nil.*"

" And when in addition, the unlucky horsemen are charged as at Wörth, over hop-poles and tree-stumps, open field-drains and shattered garden walls," said the Minister, " then they are worse than useless, I should add."

The Warlock's thin-lipped mouth opened in a silent laugh that creased his lean cheeks and displayed the gums that were all but toothless. He rubbed his hairless chin and said:

" Ay, unless from the point of view of that farmer of Schleswig-Holstein who said as our troops marched by his

barn-yard: 'Let us look on them as manure for next year's wheat!' "

The Iron Chancellor's blue eyes hardened with sudden anger. Imagine him in his great muddy jack-boots, with cord breeches not innocent of clay and soil, the black double-breasted frock with pewter buttons and yellow collar and cuff-facings, the white cap with the yellow band and the long, heavy, steel-hilted cavalry sword, puffing at a giant cigar as he stood on the doorsteps of the Mairie, over whose door drooped the Prussian flag, and the white Hohenzollern pennon with the Black Eagle and the gold blazoning, showing like the bodyguard of Red Dragoons and White Cuirassiers, the numerous orderlies, and the double cordon of sentries placed about the building, that there lodged the King. While the Red Prince's headquarters were distinguished in similar fashion at the National Bank of France.

"I have not forgotten!" The response came in Bismarck's grimmest vein of irony. "Nor has the rascal either, if he happens to be alive still. Our infantry taught him very thoroughly that there are more uses than one for a bundle of straw."

"Some of our German Princes have mastered that lesson quite recently, Excellency," said Count Paul Hatzfeldt, First Secretary of the ambulatory Foreign Office, turning a handsome humorous face upon his Chief. "The Grand Duke of Mecklenburg slept in a barn at the last halting-place, and Prince Leopold of Bavaria in a loft over a stable yard, where, as he explained afterwards, there were not only mice, but rats!"

"I understand His Excellency to refer," said Moltke, taking a pinch of snuff, "to the Polish method of flogging, which is to tie a man face-downwards on a truss and thrash him to a jelly with green birch-rods."

"Precisely. Only not having birch rods 'convenient' as Lever's Irishmen would say," returned the Chancellor, "our

fellows used their belts—buckle-end preferably. Then they pitched the farmer on his own dunghill, and left him to rot there for the land in spring."

"Severe, but severe lessons are best remembered," said the Warlock, placidly. "Thus MacMahon will perhaps throw no more regiments of cavalry away! As for ourselves, we have hardly brought that arm of the Service to its present condition of usefulness to handle it wastefully. Military science,—true military science,—does not allow of undue extravagance in the sentient material of war. Nay,—it will never be said of me that I wasted blood prodigally!" He curved his long thin hand about his large and beautifully-shaped ear, and added, as the distant detonations of heavy artillery made the windows rattle in their sashes and the pavement quake underfoot. "They are still fighting south and west of Metz. In half-an-hour, if the firing has not abated, I am going to ride in that direction with the King."

He glanced at his chronometer, then went down the side steps, and strolled, contentedly smoking, to where his own charger and his master's were waiting in charge of some orderlies near the Royal carriages and fourgons that occupied the centre of the Market Place. While Count Hatzfeldt, glancing after the thin figure, shrugged and said to his Chief in an undertone:

"Heaven send that by this time to-morrow we may not be deploring some tremendous holocaust of Prussian cavalry! Do not ask me how the idea has suggested itself. . . ."

"Possibly,"—the Minister slightly moved his hand towards a string of country grain-waggons, crowded with wounded, and drawn by farmers' horses, converging from the westward boulevard towards the Market Place—"possibly because so many of those fellows have been brought in here since twelve noon. And in Moltke's very disclaimer

of blood-waste, you find cause of suspicion ? In that case our greatest strategist would be like the spider, who agitates her web to conceal herself before she has even been seen. Moreover, they—I refer to our wounded—have been infantry of the Third Corps chiefly, nearly all Prussians from the Mark of Brandenburg. The French prisoners were mostly horsemen; Light Blue Lancers and Cuirassiers of the Guard Imperial. What fellows are these ?" Under his heavy brows he scrutinised the approaching train of sufferers, adding: " H'm ! Marshal Frossard's chassepôtiers have taken toll of Rauch's Hussars with a vengeance ! Where are you going, Count, in such haste ?"

Halfway down the steps Hatzfeldt halted, dropping his eyeglass and turning round an astonished face.

" Going, Excellency ? Why, naturally, to speak to these wounded cavalrymen. My wife has a cousin, a captain in the Hussars of Rauch."

The Chancellor said, bending his powerful gaze on the handsome face of the diplomatic dandy:

" Let me counsel you to quench your desire for information. The King's windows are overhead. And the inquiries natural for you to make in your own character will be suspected, should His Majesty observe them—to have been prompted by me." He showed a corner of the sealed despatch he had thrust into his pocket. " You recognise the Queen's handwriting upon this envelope ? Augusta will have written another such Jeremiad to her spouse. Mercy and moderation, piety and philanthropy will be the headings of the sermon penned on my own sheets of letter-paper. The text of the King's will be, ' *Bismarck is alone to blame !*' Fortunately my back is broad, and I have his entire confidence. . . . But if he once suspected me of getting what the Yankees call ' cold feet !' . . ."

The hand that held the cigar indicated a stoppage of the foremost waggon. " See ! Moltke is speaking to the

officer in charge of the convoy. I will wager you a case of champagne that his mouth is being corked up. A wise proceeding too! For, remember, the story of a wounded man is painted from his own wounds—always a red tale of disaster. How can it be otherwise? In the heat of battle, or perhaps without having fired one shot, or ridden one charge—he has been struck down, poor wretch! and carried, bleeding, from the field. . . . Has it occurred to Your Excellency that those guns are drawing near?"

The query was addressed to Moltke, who had returned, leaving the waggon-train to jolt with its doleful load in the direction where the Flag of the Geneva Cross, hanging from doors and windows, announced the location of temporary hospitals. The expert listened as distant crashes of volley-firing were answered by the hyæna-yapping of mitrailleuses, and answered, pointing to the weather-vane on the tower of the Market Hall:

"Your Excellency is wrong. The breeze has altered its direction. It was northerly, and is now blowing directly from the west. Yet if the action should assume grave proportions, it may prove necessary to shift Headquarters to some village further afield."

"Heaven forbid!" murmured Count Hatzfeldt, expressively raising his fine eyebrows, "when one is able to get a decent dinner, and a daily bath at one's hotel! . . ."

"Heaven generally ordains, through the mouth of Your Excellency, an exodus," said the Chancellor, laughing, "when a comfortable bed falls to my lot. At Herny my couch had to be lengthened with chairs and carriage-cushions, and these kept parting company all the night long. My feet were on the floor when I awakened in the morning,—literally at cockcrow—for my window opened upon the dunghill where the lord of the poultry-yard sounded his *reveille*. Now here I am accommodated in quite respect-

able fashion; in a little red creeper-covered house at the corner of the Rue Raugraf, and three of the Councillors are stowed under the same roof with me."

"While I," said the Warlock, "have my quarters at a cleanly bakery, where there is quite an excellent piano, by the way. So that, to-night, unless Fate order otherwise, I shall hear my nephew Henry von Burt sing some of my favourite songs. He is in voice for the first time since his attack of sore throat. The King has been much pleased with his rendering of Herder's *Volkslieder* and '*Die Blumen*' of Heine, a charming thing which doubtless Your Excellency knows."

"I am acquainted with the song you mention. Or I was," returned the Chancellor, "in my salad days. They are over for me, unluckily! . . . Only Your Excellency possesses the secret of perpetual youth."

And he turned aside to receive a bulky sealed packet of despatches from a green-jacketed Royal Courier, who had just driven into the Market Place in a farmer's gig, and now got down, tossing a fee to the unwilling driver of the muddy, panting roadster. While Moltke stood smiling and humming with characteristic untunefulness a stave of the tender, sentimental ballad:

> "*If they knew it, the little flowers,*
> *How she wounded this bleeding heart,*
> *They would weep with me in bright dew-showers,*
> *Healing, healing its anguished smart!*"

Said the Minister in an undertone to Hatzfeldt, as he transferred to his keeping the bulky sealed envelope received from the courier:

"Let his Excellency sing only loud enough, and neither Steinmetz or the Red Prince will be able to prevent the music-loving Frenchmen from retiring upon Verdun."

He had not meant the pungent jest to reach the ear of

the great strategist. But Moltke glanced round and answered mildly, if with a narrowing of his wrinkled eyelids, and a sardonic twist of his thin, dry lips:

"Then all the more surely should we surround and annihilate them. My second plan is usually stronger than my first. And I have already issued instructions to Prince Frederick Charles and General Steinmetz, indicating the course they are to follow should Bazaine pierce our left wing. Meanwhile let us listen to this fellow's singing. It may please Your Excellency better than mine!"

The arrival, a Captain of Dragoons of the Prussian Guard, acting as *aide-de-camp* upon the staff of Steinmetz, had just galloped into Pont à Mousson, accompanied by an escort of half-a-dozen troopers on blown horses, and had little breath left even for speech. But when he threw himself from his reeking beast, the despatch he took from his belt-pouch and handed to the Chief of the Great Staff told of a huge expenditure of "the sentient material of war."

At noon of the day, looking from his point of observation on the high ground between the Bois des Ognons and Gravelotte, short-legged, fiery-tempered Steinmetz had seen what seemed a weak spot in the French position. Under cannon, mitrailleuse and chassepôt-fire he had ordered several batteries of the 7th Corps and Von Hartmann's Division of cavalry to cross the Gravelotte defile and plant themselves on the slopes south of the road. Death had harvested redly from the extravagant movement. The slaughter that ensued had shaken even the men who carried the needle-gun, their huge columns were giving ground. General Steinmetz and his staff were under heavy fire. Only the Prussian field-batteries, served and trained by gunner-sharpshooters, kept the German right wing from caving in.

Heavy news, one would suppose, yet the Warlock read the despatch to his master with as placid an expression as

though he were at that moment seated beside the baker's excellent piano, listening to the tender warblings of the melodious Henry von Burt.

"Steinmetz is over ardent, it may be, yet it is what I should have done, had I been in his place," he said in answer to some perturbed exclamation of King William's. "Only, perhaps," he fingered his long chin thoughtfully, "I should have done it in a different way. He is supported by now. Stülpnagel will have thrown his Division forward and gripped the woods and heights upon the French left. Your Majesty will see a change in our favour by the time we have reached the ground!"

"Your Excellency should be there now and I with you. Pray order the horses!" urged the agitated King.

"They are waiting, sire!" said the Warlock, cool, calm, and inscrutable as ever. In fact, he hummed another bar or two of the plaintive ballad about the weeping flowers as he followed his Royal master downstairs to the door, and the War Minister, Roon, who had been hastily sent for, rode up with his staff as the King mounted his steadiest charger, a powerful black horse.

"The Federal Chancellor, Count von Bismarck Schönhausen, begs permission to accompany your Majesty!" said Hatzfeldt, gracefully approaching as the orderly of the Body-guard resigned the bridle-rein.

He said to himself as he returned with the graciously accorded permission, to where the Minister waited by the big brown mare that was held by an orderly of Cuirassiers:

"How perfect is his discretion! How completely he hides the iron grip of power under the velvet glove of diplomacy! Roon is the King's quartermaster-sergeant, Moltke is his calculating machine, Bismarck is his ruler—but he will always seem his slave! Wherever the King goes—on journeys, shooting excursions, visits to watering-places—he is always at his elbow; he rides with him to

manœuvres, and reviews and parades. Since the War began—and at cost of what exertion, mental and bodily, no one understands better than I do !—he has never left his master alone for long enough to further the intrigues and influence of other men. . . . Every battle-field the King looks on will be seen through the Chancellor's eyes. For this War is *his* War—and he knows it ! . . . Here come galloping the Royalties and Serene Highnesses, rabid to see some real fighting. . . . Bismarck calls them the Tinsel Rabble,—if only they knew !"

And Count Paul, smiling in his subtly satirical fashion, strode back to his quarters to pen to his young, pretty, and exceedingly coquettish Countess, a marital letter full of tender expressions, and requests for lots more cigarettes. While their Highnesses and Mightinesses of the Royal Suite pranced away in the wake of the King and his three great servants, without the slightest idea that the Chancellor who rode on William's left hand held them in such contempt.

The wounded men sitting or lying on hay in the grain-carts at the hospital doors looked up as the Great Headquarter Staff rode by and gave a shaky Hoch ! of greeting. Heads of dressers, nurses, Knights of St. John, and surgeons appeared at windows from which projected the Flag with the Red Cross. While a long train of haggard French prisoners, halted before the porch of the church that had been converted into a temporary prison, stared with lack-lustre eyes over the bowls of cabbage-soup, and the huge hunches of bread that had been distributed amongst them by pitying ladies; and a battalion of little black-a-vised, green-coated Saxon soldiers who had marched in dead-beat and were dozing on straw under the Market Hall, lifted their heads from their knapsacks, saying: "There goes Moltke with his King, and the Big Pommeranian. Something is up out yonder !" and rolled over to sleep again. . . .

The inhabitants and tradespeople of Pont à Mousson were too crushed to make any audible comments. Within a fortnight they had had twice to feed and quarter a French Division. Now here, as it seemed, was the whole Prussian Army poured out upon them.

They were dumb and stupefied in the Babel of foreign dialects. They could make no headway against the flood. Everywhere were loud-voiced Intendants making requisitions and giving orders; officers and quartermaster-sergeants shouting for rooms, provender and stabling; the men, like the officers, insatiable in demands for meat, bread, forage, tobacco, flour and wine, liberal in oaths and blows to those who could not satisfy their needs.

Tradesmen in gutted shops swore in whispers over basketsful of dirty little nickel coins with (to them) indecipherable inscriptions—all they had to show in return for one or two thousand francs' worth of stock. To grumble brought retribution, swift, sharp and merciless on the head of the grumbler. To resist meant death. Therefore they would be silent until the invader should have passed on.

But when the wearers of the muddy blue uniforms and the riders of the muddy, well-fed horses did pass, fresh hosts came swarming after. There seemed no end to the brown-faced men in the loathed blue uniform. . . .

"Are there more to come?" those of them who understood French—and many did—were asked timidly, and were answered: "Naturally. We are only the Advance. To keep the roads by which we have passed open, and to guard the telegraph-wires we have left behind us there will be very many more required!"

Germany was being emptied into France's lap, it seemed to the bewildered peasants leaning against the walls of their cottages or peering from the doorways, as had done the peasants of Alsace-Lorraine. They also were ruined, their crops devastated by cataclysms of armed

humanity, their cellars emptied, their frugal stores devoured.

"But where are we to find food for all these, we who had fared badly enough before they came? And who will pay us for what they have not paid for, or give cash for this stuff called money that they have left behind? Will it be the King or the Emperor?" some haggard man or woman, reckless with despair and misery, would demand with frantic gestures. "And how shall we feed our children when they leave us nothing? How live at all when they live upon us?"

They asked this less often when the Flag with the Geneva Cross appeared above roofs and thrust out of windows of buildings appropriated as hospitals, and when long trains of German ambulance-waggons and hay-carts full of wounded men in blue uniforms began to pass by, as well as piteous processions of French wounded and French prisoners. . . .

"You see, they die!" they began to tell each other after Gravelotte. "Frenchmen are being killed like flies out yonder where you hear the cannon, but not Frenchmen only. . . . MacMahon has failed us and the cursed Emperor has run away for fear of Bismarck, and Bazaine may prove a rotten staff for France to lean on. But if our generals have forgotten how to lead, the Army of France has not forgotten how to fight, and thousands upon thousands of Prussians have been killed since the beginning of the War. They dig their great trenches so quickly and despatch the dying and bury the slain in such haste that the greatness of their losses will never be really known. When they would hide them more completely, they heap up corpses in farmers' barns, and pile the farmers' straw and hay and faggots about them, and pour on petroleum and tar and set fire to it—and thus their dead are consumed to ashes—and sometimes the yet living with the dead!"

As at Paris, spy-fever raged in cities, towns and villages, while the armies of the invader ploughed bleeding furrows in the flank of prostrate France. For the Prussian Secret Intelligence Department had its emissaries everywhere. Hotels, public bureaus, railway-stations, shops, offices, even clubs, had harboured them unknowingly. Now they cropped up on all sides, speaking French with the Gallic accent, their German brains full of neatly pigeon-holed and locketed information, ready to place themselves at the disposal of their friends. Hence, patriotic Frenchmen, favoured by chance or heredity with blue eyes, fair hair, ruddy complexions and the advantage as to inches over their neighbours, found themselves cold-shouldered by their intimates and subjected to unpleasantly suspicious scrutiny when consuming refreshment in *cafés* and restaurants, or strolling with their acquaintances on public boulevards.

English artists attached to illustrated newspapers, special correspondents, handicapped by blonde whiskers and an imperfect acquaintance with the French language, found themselves in many a tight place. "*Mort aux espions!*" is not a cheering cry when some thousands of red-hot throats are uttering it, and half-a-dozen soldiers or *gensdarmes* form the only barrier between the unlucky suspects and the furious mob.

XLII.

A MUD-BEDAUBED nondescript who toiled at the heels of the Great Headquarter Staff upon a huge velocipede of the big-wheeled, bone-shaker type prevalent at that remote period, encountered plenty of scowling glances from groups of peasants gathered at the corners of villages or whispering by the wayside. Even on territory occupied by German troops, it was not safe for lagging soldiers to drop behind upon the march. To enter roadside taverns or farmhouses

with a comrade was imprudent, to venture in alone was perilous, the sight of the German uniform, the sound of the Teutonic gutturals, were so fiercely abhorred. Of the reason for this loathing the Englishman was not ignorant. Marching with the infantry of the German Army, he had followed where the Uhlans had passed.

He had slept, the night before the Army of the Red Prince had crossed the river,—in a little deserted country *château,*—an ideal honeymoon nest for lovers, standing in a high-walled garden full of fruit-trees and tangled roses, in the middle of a sloping meadow on the banks of the Moselle.

The butt of some Prussian carbine or rifle had served for key to the locked door in the high garden-wall. Those who had gone before had stripped the bushes and espaliers. The house had been entered, and the dainty silk-upholstered drawing-room chairs and sofas had been dragged out into the garden. The piano—a tiny rosewood *bijou*—probably a wedding present—and the absurd little billiard-table with which Monsieur had disported himself, stood crookedly upon the gravel; a long tear in the green cloth of the one; prints of tumblers, marks of greasy fingers marring the shiny veneer of the other. Bottles that had contained Champagne and Moselle—butts of cigars, empty tobacco-papers and match-boxes were scattered everywhere—over gravel, and grass-plot and the once trim garden-beds. An impromptu *café*-concert had evidently formed a feature of the bivouac.

P. C. Breagh had slept in a charming bedroom, under rosebud-chintz curtains looped with silken ropes, having carved wooden Cupids, painted pink, instead of tassels. The bed was not as luxurious as it might have been, because the blankets and sheets had been carried off. Opening his eyes in the grey of morning he had seen himself as he lay reflected in a long cheval-glass, and failed, for the moment,

to recognise in the bronzed, shaggy, unclean tatterdemalion therein reflected, the young Englishman of respectable appearance who had interviewed the German States' Chancellor in the Wilhelm-strasse.

He was not alone in the room, that was the next discovery. A woman, young and swarthy, dressed in the quaint costume of the country, stood upon the other side of the bed, with a kitchen-chopper in her lifted right hand. He took in the chopper at a glance, and promptly rolled off the bed upon the side facing the friendly cheval-glass, and stood glowering at the black-eyed girl.

"I have startled Monsieur? A thousand apologies!"

She forced a smile with her curtsey and backed towards the door. P. C. Breagh explained in his French, that he was no robber but a harmless traveller, and that she need not be alarmed:

"Monsieur is very kind!" Her chopper-hand hidden under her apron, she explained that she had served as cook in the establishment. Upon the news that M. de Bismarck was coming, *tout à coup,* Monsieur and Madame had gone away together to Paris. They were noble and very amiable, but old, old, and feeble. . . . They had left the little *château* in her care. . . .

"Mademoiselle is not easily frightened?" P. C. Breagh hinted.

Said the black-eyed, modestly:

"I am Angéle—nothing of Mademoiselle. A peasant—like my father, who was gardener for Monsieur and Madame. . . . I was alone here when the Prussian horsemen came, breaking the doors and shutters. . . . Everything was spoiled, or taken, wine, linen, the fowls in the poultry-run. Destitution, ruin everywhere! . . ."

She accentuated her tale of loss by heavings of the bosom, shrugs of the fine shoulders, dramatic gestures.

"Then my father returned and found . . . No matter!

Both he and I should have been silent and endured everything. . . . It was not wise, Monsieur, that the old man should have struck a Prussian, even for my sake! For then he was beaten. Whenever I shut my eyes, I see it. . . . Therefore I have vowed not to sleep again until . . ." She opened her eyes wide, and smiled, rather grimly, then changed the subject with a wave of the unchoppered and visible hand: Was Monsieur hungry? By searching a crust of bread might be found in some cupboard, an egg or two—laid by one of the abducted hens in some private corner—a pinch of coffee and sugar sufficient for Monsieur!

"I should be glad of it. But—when you are in such trouble it seems unfair," protested Monsieur. He added, reverting to the language of the country, that he would be happy, if permitted, to pay for the *déjeuner*.

"But no! A meal for a bird!—Monsieur and Madame will never miss it!" and Angéle curtseyed herself away, with forced smiles.

Left alone, P. C. Breagh bolted the door, and finding water in the bedroom jugs, and scented soap upon the washstand, enjoyed the luxury of a comprehensive wash, drying himself in the absence of towels, upon a pillow-case. A pot of cold-cream, tinted a delicate pink and bearing the label of Piesse and Lubin, he found, and anointed his blistered feet therewith, and not without pangs of conscience—tore up the pillow-case and bandaged them. He would pay the poor girl for the damage done to her master's property, he told himself.

He combed his shock of dusty hair with a tortoise-shell comb he picked up from the carpet, and went downstairs, knapsack in hand. It was four o'clock a.m. The dusty, footprint and wheel-marked highway beyond the broken door in the garden-wall was strangely bare and lonely. The battalion he had marched with had bivouacked on the other

side of the village. The troops that would presently follow were not yet upon the road.

The girl cried out that Monsieur's breakfast was ready It had been laid, looking quite tempting, on one . . . of the little inlaid tables that stood upon the tiny lawn. A truncheon of bread, fairly new, a pat of butter, two eggs, and a bowl of fragrant, steaming milk and coffee—such a meal as P. C. Breagh had not enjoyed for many a day.

He begged Angéle to share. She replied with a graceful wave of abnegation that she had already eaten. P. C. Breagh expressed regret, muttered his old Rockhampton grace and savagely fell to.

"Monsieur is Catholic ? . . ."

The movement of his hand, making the sacred Sign, had not escaped her. He nodded, with his mouth full, and Angéle turned pale under her swarthy skin. Her guest vigorously beheaded an egg, and reached for the coffee-bowl. The expression of the girl's eyes, as he lifted it to his mouth, brought something back to him. He sipped cautiously—recognised the French equivalent for English rat-poison—spat forth what he had taken, with a hideous grimace, and poured the deadly stuff out upon the ground.

Then he got up and looked for Angéle, whose white-frilled cap, crimson bodice, and striped stuff petticoat had vanished round the corner of the little hen-house. He could hear the *klop-klop* of her varnished cow-leather clogs receding along paths unknown.

Said P. C. Breagh, speaking with mouth awry, for the intense bitterness of the alkaloid had dried tongue and palate up:

"I'd like to follow that girl and shake her! But more than likely her sweetheart and male relatives are lurking in the neighbourhood with pitchforks, to speed the unwelcome guest."

He went back to the breakfast-table, but the glamour

had faded from the banquet, and the leathery dryness of mouth and throat foiled him in the effort to finish the egg he had begun. He pocketed the other, abandoned the bread and butter as unreliable, strapped on his dusty knapsack, and was hobbling away upon the sticks that had lately served him as crutches, when he caught sight of an obviously new coffin, of thin tarred planking, on the gravel near the conservatory door. It bore a cross and an inscription roughly scrawled in letters of white paint:

†

JOSEPH MARIE MEUNIER,

AGED 80.

KILLED BY THE PRUSSIANS,

AUGUST, 1870.

R.I.P.

And then, with a stiffening of every muscle and a cold and deadly sinking at the heart, the English boy realized that Angéle's father had been murdered, and knew what had been the unendurable injury that had provoked the man of eighty to strike in his daughter's defence. Next instant a gun banged, but the charge of slugs that had been meant to lodge in P. C. Breagh's cerebellum merely smashed the conservatory glass and peppered the walls and trees. The intended recipient of these favours had previously been lame. Now, regardless of blisters and skin cracks, he cast away his improvised crutches, darted down the garden-path, nipped through the shattered door that hung upon one twisted hinge, and ran for dear life.

Thenceafter our young friend did not stray too far from the column he temporarily marched with. The secret of those haggard eyes and scowling looks was clear to him now. And the discovery of a giant velocipede with the solid rubber tyres of the period and a front wheel of four feet

in diameter, abandoned in a ditch, presently enabled him—previously schooled by Mr. Ticking in the management of a machine of similar construction—to outpace the Red Prince's marching battalions, and—upon highways, keep abreast of his flying cavalry.

Now, hugely daring, he pounded along in the wake of the Great Headquarter Staff, guided by the whipping flicker of the black-and-white lance-pennons of the Red Uhlans bringing up the rear.

There were troops upon the road. . . . One or two stray batteries of artillery, and part of an Engineer Corps going the same way, halted to give a cheer for the King. But the galloping despatch-bearers with their guards of troopers, bound for Pont à Mousson, meeting the Great Staff on the way, turned back with it, adding to the clouds of dust in its wake.

The Doctor had promised P. C. Breagh plenty of raw-head and bloody-bones, whether he marched with the Advance or remained at the rear. The prophecy had been verified. He had not yet seen a battle or even a battle-field. But thousands of wounded men, displaying every sickening mutilation that shot and shell and steel can inflict upon the human body; thousands upon thousands of prisoners, gaunt with fatigue, hunger and misery, had passed in an almost unending panorama before his sickened, pitying eyes. Ruined *châteaux*, farms and churches, crops destroyed or rotting in the ground ungarnered, townsfolk and peasants stupefied with misery, ill-usage, or hunger, villages razed or burned, towns battered out of shape, and fortifications breached by heavy gunnery, were to become sights of common occurrence as he travelled the long red road that was to lead him home at last.

Now he rode and odd lines of songs, comic or tender, fragments of Fleet Street talk, brain-pictures of things

or persons remembered passed through his mind as he pedalled between long lines of roadside poplars, whitening in the hot breeze that carried the scorching dust along in clouds.

The face of the peasant girl who had tried to poison him. By George! if Mrs. Rousby or Miss Marriott or Mrs. Vezin could have seen her fierce, gleaming eyes, and her heavy black eyebrows lifted at the outer corners, and the way a white canine tooth had nipped her red underlip. . . . The voice of Mr. Knewbit barking "Avoid Sham Technicality and Sentimental Slumgullion," the well-bred voice of Valverden dealing the unforgotten snub. The fortune told him by the gipsy woman on Waterloo Bridge after that unforgettable January night's vigil: "Yer'll travel a long road and a bloody road; and yer'll tramp it with the one yer love, and never know it, until the end, when tute is jasing. . . ."

"When tute is jasing" meant "When thou art going . . ." he had been told so by a man who knew a bit of Romany. His imagination made a grasshopper-leap of years to the death-bed of a celebrated War Correspondent,—a grim, bronzed man who had followed his arduous calling in many quarters of the world, and had earned much *kudos* and a whole chestful of decorations, but had never married, and was understood to look with coldness upon the loveliest women, his heart having been irrevocably given in earlier days.

To the moribund's side Juliette—still young, and ah! how exquisite in widow's weeds,—would hasten, and place her little hand in his, gaunt and damp with approaching death. She would hear his story of faithful, hopeless passion, and close his eyelids for the last long sleep. And standing by his pillow, looking pityingly at the dead face, she would realise that she loved—too late. . . .

He sniffed and gulped as the tears stung his smarting

eyelids, so moving was the picture of that death-bed scene.

A vivid picture of the King of Prussia as he had seen him sitting at the open window of his lodgings at the Mairie of Pont à Mousson next came up, with faces of market-people and street-boys gaping round-eyed at *Le Roi de la Prusse,* who nursed his clean-shaven chin, and stared unwinkingly before him. Again, the old man, pale, square-shouldered, capped and tightly-buttoned, riding through the market-place with his Iron Chancellor by his side.

Wiry, hawk-eyed Moltke and saturnine, shaggy-browed Roon clattered upon the heels of them, but P. C. Breagh had had eyes only for the great soldierly figure that bestrode the big brown mare.

Did he not owe his life to the well-shaped hand that had rested on the thigh of the brown mare's rider, as the Minister bent to speak to the King ?

No common bond of confidence and friendship seemed to unite the master of seventy-three and the man of fifty-five. The hard, somewhat vulpine face of the Hohenzollern, with its drooping, aquiline nose, narrow light hazel eyes, curled white moustache, precise, tight-lipped mouth and rounded chin projecting between the brushed back white whiskers had been all alight with interest, and warm with kindliness.

This is what the Man of Iron had said with his small square teeth showing laughingly under the heavy hair-brake, and his fierce, prominent blue eyes sparkling with humour and fun:

"The final scenes of melodrama are always the most strenuous. Your Majesty must regard the ridge above Flavigny as your Royal box on the Grand Tier, the occasion as a farewell performance of the French Empire—played for the benefit of United Germany, before the whole world !"

Flavigny was a village. . . . But the flickering black-

and-white pennons that tipped the galloping dust-cloud ahead were slowing. . . . Three battalions of infantry, each with its band playing gaily at its head, the bronzed, healthy-looking, white-powdered men marching eight abreast, had halted and front-faced as the word of command followed the sound of the Great Staff trumpeter:

"*Clear the way! Clear the way! Here comes the King!*"

And now the scorching air vibrated with their vigorous cheering as the King cantered by and was gone with a shout, and a wave of the hand.

"Our old one takes dust and sun, saddle-blisters and short commons like any tough trooper!" P. C. Breagh heard a Lieutenant say to a subaltern as the dusty ranks half wheeled and fell into step once more. "He's a precisian too. . . . *Zum beispiel,* he yesterday called to a man in Vidler's company that he had got his 'needler' on the wrong shoulder. Now that's another thing I like in the old man! . . ."

"The Field-Marshal is taking the Great Headquarters to where it will be hellishly risky," a Captain with Staff shoulder-cords was saying to another, as a new outbreak of cannon and mitrailleuse-fire caused his horse to start and rear. He added: "They were hard at it at Mars la Tour, Vionville and Rezonville all day yesterday: the 5th Division were in action all round Moltke as he stood on the high ridge above Flavigny. . . . To-day our 7th and 10th are fighting between Gravelotte and St. Hubert, where the French have the devil's own array of battery-emplacements and rifle-pits—our Guards are at Doncourt, our 9th and 8th corps are at Vernéville and Amanvilliers. Now the fighting seems to have rolled down nearer the river. I have certainly heard cavalry trumpets sounding the charge, and volleys of musketry—French, I judge!—coming from that direction. I should judge that——"

"Bazaine must have turned the handle in too much of

a hurry!" retorted the junior, who enjoyed a regimental reputation for humour, and a volley of laughter rattled along the marching files, now breasting a steep and gravelly hill.

P. C. Breagh had seen, reproduced from the *Charivari* in all the German illustrated papers, the famous caricature of Cham, over which King William's brown-faced infantrymen were grinning as they climbed the hill. Who does not remember the Count de Noë's memorable presentment of the field of war dotted with defunct Prussians, and the French mitrailleuse-gunner in the foreground who exclaims in astonishment: "*Sapristi!* the battle is over. I must have turned the handle too fast!"

But more than the sardonic jest of Cham, the Captain's reference to the nearness of a possible action interested the would-be spectator of a battlefield. The wiry, sun-bronzed young man in the broken boots and the dusty brown Norfolk jacket, now pushing the solid-tyred giant-wheel up the steep and lung-testing hill which the bearers of the needle-gun took in a canter, had seen war-casualties in appalling numbers, but he had not yet beheld War.

And now sharp bugles and piercing trumpets were clamouring of War all round one. The musketry that one could hear at Pont à Mousson clattered in volleys amongst the neighbouring hills. The deep booming of heavy field-batteries persistently answered. Every now and then the ear was violently assaulted by the hyæna-yapping of the mitrailleuse.

These breasting hills, these deep-cupped valleys walled and ramparted with wood-crested hill-ranges, cut up an honest battle into a dozen skirmishes. Oh! for an open champaign and a vantage on some breezy hill-top whence one might see, as the King was seeing with Moltke and his Chancellor, from the ridge above Flavigny!

XLIII.

The ridge above Flavigny seemed farther off and more inaccessible than the Great Atlas. One must get off the highroad to some elevated bit of ground, consult the Doctor's map, and use the Chancellor's binoculars. Here was a broad track, green with grass grown over ancient wheel-ruts, leading off upon the left near the crest of the hill.

The grass-road led to a stone quarry evidently long abandoned. Skirting the quarry, P. C. Breagh began to climb the grassy scarp of the hill. It grew steeper, and presently he awakened to the difficulties of mountaineering with a velocipede, and hid away, with the intention of retrieving it later, his stolen giant-wheel in a clump of whins. Alas! its bones, like those of many a sentient charger, were to rust in rains, and blister in suns upon that hillside of the Meurthe Department for many and many a year.

But not knowing this, P. C. Breagh continued climbing. The ridgy backbone of turf-jacketed rock proved a natural buttress rising to a towering platform sparsely grassed, tufted with thorn and furze-bushes, stunted pines and dwarfy oak-trees, all mossy of stem and bending to the south-west.

The afternoon sunshine was mellow rather than hot. The pure dustless air was fragrant with hill-thyme and the meadow-sweet. The autumn-tinted woods were golden, the hills bathed in clear blue air. The short herbage clothing the steep was warm, smelling like the clean hide of some great grass-feeding animal. But for the restless bickering of trumpets and bugles, and the hellish noise that men with guns were making, it would have been sweet to be upon the hillside alone with God.

There was a great view from the summit of the colossal

limestone. . . . You could see that bone of contention, the road leading to Verdun, stretching away south-westwards, a dusty-white ribbon between its lines of whitening poplars, over the tops of three thick patches of rusty-golden woodland, and the bushy uplands above Gravelotte and the church spire of Vernéville.

Dark-blue Prussian columns showed on the grassy slopes traversed by the road that ran from Ars to Bagneux. Near the Quarries of Rezerieulles was a huge French battery served by red-legged artillerymen, who ran about like ants. But one could only guess at the fact that Germany and the Bad Neighbour were locked in the death-grips over six miles square of battle-ground, the breasting plumps of trees and towering bush-clad ridges hid so much away.

Ah! but the din was hellish! The woods vomited fire. White balloons that meant shrapnel-shells described arcs against the hot blue sky, crossing and recrossing between Rezonville and Gravelotte. When they fell upon the slippery grass slopes they exploded with fearful crashes, or became black balls that rolled merrily a while and then lay quiet. In the grass near them were shapeless lumps and masses, red and blue, and dark blue; and things with stiff legs sticking up grotesquely,—the human and equine *débris* of the morning's fighting and the battle of the previous day. The soft westerly breeze brought an ugly taint upon it—less loathsome, but more horrible than the stench coming from the huge crowded camps of French about St. Quentin and Plappeville and Les Carriéres and St. Eloy.

Two great nations at each other's throats and God's image being shattered everywhere. Blizzards of Lead and Iron, Steel and Fire, raging over six miles square of ground. Rivers of blood being poured out, and yet, in spite of the terrific din of War, the insects and birds and beasts went about their usual business here. The shrill

laugh of the green woodpecker sounded in the copses, the jackdaws were gossiping as they darted in and out of the clefts of the grey rock. Two magpies were feeding a late-hatched fledgling with carrion amongst the dwarfy oak-scrub. Rabbits were showing their white scuts on the edges of the oak-plantations; and the black and grey humble-bees were buzzing as they rifled the lavender scabious, and the blue corn-bottles, and the late white clover-blooms.

Looking north-east towards the richly wooded hill where perches Fort Queleu, you could see the French flag flying from there, and from St. Privat, and the great cathedral of Metz sitting in the lap of the Moselle. The railway bridge crossing the green, slowly rolling river above Ars was guarded by Uhlans and Engineers. A stray outpost with half a field-battery held the island below the bridge, and the rear squadrons of a brigade of cavalry,—Blue Dragoons, White Cuirassiers, Uhlans, and Red Hussars, with two batteries of Horse Artillery, were traversing the iron road-way, the troopers walking beside the horses as they deli-cately picked their way along. The Advance was almost out of sight, the midmost squadrons, remounted, were passing under the bluff that runs beside the river road from Ars to below Aney, and with the Staff of the Cuirassier brigade-commander,—the dazzling scarlet-and-gold of the British Dragoon's uniform contrasting forcibly with the steel cuirasses and white coats, the gilt star fronting his white-plumed silver helmet shining like a miniature sun—rode Brotherton, on a powerful dappled-grey horse, his hand-some face animated and eager as he replied to some remark addressed to him by the Brigadier.

"Certainly, General, but I should think the sword could never be superseded. It is, with the bow and spear, the traditional weapon of war."

"You omit the sling, Colonel!" called out an officer

who rode behind him. And then the scrap of English talk was swamped in the clink of steel on steel, and the rhythmical trampling of the squadrons that followed on.

P. C. Breagh sat astride of a hot boulder, got out the Doctor's map and adjusted his cherished binoculars. They showed him the battalion he had marched with halted by the side of the river road. The bridge near Pagny showed black with solid columns of infantry, marching eight abreast; their sun-touched bayonets rippling lines of molten silver, each helmet-spike a flame of ruddy gold.

The First and Second Armies of United Germany, hitherto compelled to a strenuous inactivity, were having their innings with a vengeance now. . . . Looking Metz-wards one could see that three new lines of pontoons were thrown across the river below Vaux. A division of the dark-blue soldiers, with eight squadrons of cavalry and half-a-dozen batteries of mounted Artillery, were crossing almost within range of the guns of Mount St. Quentin and Plappeville.

How thickly the white tents were clustered on the green slopes about both fortresses, Red Breeches swarming in thousands without and within the walls. Were the gunners of the huge bronze Creusots one had read of, asleep, or lazy, or indifferent ? The answer came in a spirt of white vapour from an embrasure of the middle salient of St. Quentin's long, eight-pointed star. A white-hot flame leaped, a towering cloud of smoke soared, — the roar of a heavy piece of artillery followed; and a shell of big calibre soared above Moulins and burst with a shattering explosion and an uprush of violet and crimson fire. Some Artillery-horses on the nearest pontoon reared, causing a momentary confusion. Their dismounted drivers quieted them, and the orderly crossing went on.

Boom-Boom ! Crack ! A clatter like old iron and a heavy splashing and pounding of hoofs. St. Quentin had

got the range.—No ! the shrapnel shell had been fired from a French field-battery placed behind earthworks above St. Ruffine. Another shell hit the upper pontoon and must have smashed it adrift on the landing side. For dark-blue men and struggling horses were drifting away in the direction of Metz, and the green river was tinged with red. The wheelers of a gun-team, dragged downwards by the weight attached to them, had gone to the bottom almost without a struggle. The leaders, submerged all but their wild heads and splashing fore-hoofs, battled a while with the current before one of them vanished. The other, whose rope-and-chain traces had somehow broken, swam gallantly down-stream, and finally landed on the farther bank.

Further successful practice on the part of France's artillerists may have followed. At this juncture the attention of P. C. Breagh became diverted by a curious fact. One of the stone-pines seemed to be lobbing cones at him. *Whiff-phutt !* they were dropping on all sides. Or could it ? . . . A shrill whistling sound close by his ear, and a simultaneous bristling of the hairs upon his scalp and body, told him that it could. The missiles were bullets.

They came, sometimes with a sharp whistle that told of unexpended energy, at others with the pleasant humming that had at first attracted him, from the woods that clothed the rising ground north-west and west of the platform he occupied.

Were they Prussian bullets or French ? At the moment, the question did not interest him. He had pocketed his map and crawling on his belly towards the southern edge of his platform, looked cautiously over, meditating descent. Beyond was a sandwich-shaped stretch of woodland climbing to a ridge; and beyond the ridge a considerable expanse of bush-dotted common bordered by a stream and speckled with a few farm-buildings. Quite a decent-sized town lifted its Norman church-tower nearly a mile away.

The town must be Gorze. Withdrawing his eyes from it they dropped into a deep ravine or combe running parallel with the west and southern sides of the giant limestone rock he sprawled on. Ferns clothed the deep, hollowed sides, and oaks and birches, springing from the bottom, lifted their bushy heads to the level of his face. Spying between the branches, he saw that the ravine was full of garishly coloured lights and shadows, and that a steady current of glittering white metal snaked in and out between the tree-trunks, setting from west to east.

Bayonets, carried on the shoulders of red-breeched French soldiers, moving with startling rapidity over the dry leaves at the bottom of the ravine. A battalion, at least, of wiry, active-looking Voltigeurs, a mitrailleuse-battery, each weapon hauled by a team of three gunners. . . . Green-coated Chasseurs *à pied,* with cocks' plumes shading the peaks of their *képis,* followed. Would a surprise be intended for the Prussian cavalry-brigades that had crossed the railway-bridge and ridden down the river-road a few minutes previously? In that case, what ought one to do?

Even as he asked, the advanced company of Voltigeurs discovered the Prussian squadrons. He saw a ripple of excitement pass down the ranks, and the Voltigeurs hurry forwards at the double. He saw the mitrailleuse-batteries string out in line, push up the sloping sides of the ravine, and scatter among the trees of the plantation that climbed the ridge. The Chasseurs followed. Their intention was obvious. They were going to enfilade the passing brigades from the cover of the wood.

Even as the hounds of hell seemed to break loose, and a sheet of hot yellow-white flame ran from end to end of the ridge where the trees ended, the foremost brigade of three Hussar regiments came in view, trotting over a track that traversed the common, became a road, and plunged between deep woodlands trending west. His map had told him

that the road led to Rezonville and branched off east to Gravelotte.

He heard the Prussian trumpets sound through the ear-splitting racket of the French rifle-fire. He saw through the thin haze of powder-smoke that hung above the wood, the massed columns split into squadrons, the squadrons divide into troops, the troops become units—scattered over the common, galloping to re-form again upon the road that led through the woods to Rezonville.

They were two of the brigades forming Rheinbaben's Fifth Division, under von Barby and von Bredow, pushing forwards to join General von Redern in the neighbourhood of Mars la Tour. Their mobility saved them from decimation on a grand scale, but they left dead horses and men and officers dead and wounded. Their retreat was covered by one of their batteries of Horse-Artillery, and two squadrons of a Uhlan regiment.

In the distance a riderless gray charger galloped wildly over the common, and a prone figure in a brilliant scarlet coat lay motionless beside the track. More could not be observed just then, for the battery of Horse Artillery got into position, while the Uhlans dismounted and coolly returned with carbine-fire the enfilade from the chassepôts in the wood.

They knelt, and aimed and shot without hurry, and that their shooting was effective was demonstrated to the non-combatant onlooker, by half-a-dozen French Artillerymen and Chasseurs *à pied* who came staggering or limping back through the trees, and got down into the ravine. One toppled over in the act of negotiating the descent, and lay sprawling and head downwards. Another, who kept putting a hand to his streaming cheek, and taking it away to stare at the blood upon it, was shot again in a vital part, spun round, and collapsed in a heap.

"*Lee-ee eer!*"

The wailing, stinging screech of a bullet that had shaved unpleasantly near was accompanied by the whisking of the sun-scorched straw hat from the head of P. C. Breagh, and a pang of deadly terror. In the same instant the Prussian field-battery opened fire. Beyond the trees four puffs of white smoke went up, and four tongues of bright greenish-yellow flame preceded the quadruple crash of the driving-charges. Lanes opened through the smoke-filled wood, as trees split into kindling and match-sticks. And heaps of green and scarlet rags mixed with bloody flesh and shattered bones mingled with the *débris*. And something that screamed like a devil unchained, hurtled through intervening space, and plumped upon the limestone platform within a dozen feet of P. C. Breagh. And he shrieked like a shot rabbit as it exploded with a splitting crash, and a spurt of evil yellow fire licked the skin off his ear and cheek.

Dazed and stupefied, he removed himself to the farther and more sheltered side of the platform. But the skirmish was over, the Voltigeurs and the Chasseurs *à pied*, with what remained of the mitrailleuse-battery, had not waited for the Uhlans to charge, but were in pell-mell retreat along the ravine. He heard a French voice cry savagely:

"We are cut off! These woods are full of Prussians!"

And in the same instant, through the lanes that had been hacked through the trees, P. C. Breagh saw the Prussian artillery limber up, and ride off with what remained of the Uhlan squadrons. They were wanted badly at the front, and the infantry-battalions with which P. C. Breagh had marched from Pont à Mousson, and the Division coming up from Pagny, striking into the Ars road, had crossed the upper end of the ravine. The woods were indeed full of them. And they also were wanted at the front and had no time to spare.

As blue uniforms and crimson faces topped by gilt-spiked helmets came crowding through the trees, the human river, flowing along the bottom of the defile, rose in a wave and splashed back upon itself. A red-haired young officer of Voltigeurs, drawing his sword, used his voice and the flat of the weapon to restore order; and succeeded so far that his company formed in straggling lines and began to send in volleys with the courage of despair. The gunners of the mitrailleuse that was not smashed by the German shell-fire could not use the piece effectively at the bottom of the death-trap. They were shot down in the attempt.

It was cool, scientific slaughter—merciless carnage. Before it began, a bugle cautioned attention. A flat-capped field-officer pushed his horse to the front and cried in stentorian tones:

"Aimed fire!"

The men of the chassepôt made a gallant stand, but the odds were heavy, and the men of the needle-gun did not waste a cartridge. They loaded and aimed, shot and reloaded with machine-like precision. When the ravine was piled with bloody corpses the bugles sounded "Cease fire!" Then the Prussian field-officer spurred to the edge of the red ditch and shouted, looking down:

"Does anyone here ask quarter?"

There was a laugh. But something raised itself from a heap of bullet-pierced bodies. A rattling voice cried:

"No, dog of a Prussian!"

A revolver cracked, and the speaker, a Voltigeur, was silent. His voice had sounded like that of an old man, but he wore the epaulettes of a lieutenant and had carroty-red hair. At this juncture, being overtaken by grievous retching and vomiting, P. C. Breagh's observations ceased.

He sat up presently and wiped his dripping neck and mopped his forehead. It seemed to him that he had seen the whole French Army exterminated, and yet he had

witnessed but a skirmish ending in a *battue*. He shook his wits into some order, and controlled the shuddering that took him in the pit of the stomach, when he remembered that in common decency he must go to Brotherton.

The descent from the rock-platform was nothing more than a risky scramble. There were plenty of pine and furze-roots and jutting stones for holding to, and clefts into which to thrust one's toes. But the crossing of that ravine cumbered with bloody corpses was not effected without revolt of soul and body. He slipped once and fell, and struggled up all horribly besmeared, and sick and shaking, because the teeth of a head from which the face had been shot away had snapped close by his ear. Then came the negotiation of the bit of woodland. Here were more Voltigeurs and Chasseurs *à pied*, dead and horribly mutilated, and the wreck of a mitrailleuse, with two of its gunners. Some of these poor wounded creatures were living, and moaned for water.

"My God! how I suffer!" one feeble voice kept crying. . . .

Help was coming, for from the direction of the town some carts were being driven, one by a stout priest in cassock and broad-brimmed hat, others by men with Red Cross armlets. Black-habited, white-capped Sisters of Mercy were in these vehicles, with baskets, and pitchers, and pails.

Seven dead Hussars showing hideously the effect of mitrailleuse-fire,—a troop-horse or two, and a White Cuirassier shot through the body and swearing horribly in Low German, were the fruits of the French enfilade. The fine gray charger had ceased careering; it grazed peaceably on the short herbage by the track that led over the common. But Chris Brotherton would never sit in saddle again.

P. C. Breagh turned him gently over and opened the gold-laced scarlet tunic. There was no blood upon it, only clean dust, nor was the dead man bruised or cut, having fallen where it was grassy. Upon the broad breast, under the

white cambric shirt, was an oval miniature, pearl-set, of a pretty woman. The handsome mouth of the wearer smiled under the drooping fair moustache, and his blue eyes stared glassily. A bluish hole in the right temple and a bloody clot amidst the hair upon the left side, showed where the chassepôt bullet had traversed the brain.

He had been high-handed, arrogant, and domineering, yet the Doctor and the horsey Towers had seemed fond of him. No doubt that woman in the miniature had held Chris Brotherton dear. . . . P. C. Breagh would have left her fair face lying on the yet warm breast of her lover, but something he saw going on among the casualties upon the edge of the wood, caused him to change his mind.

That gaunt-eyed, greedy-fingered creature in the peasant's blouse with the Red Cross brassard, who glided from body to body, rifling pockets, should not plunder the Doctor's friend. With this determination, Carolan took away the portrait, a packet of letters, and Brotherton's watch and purse and pocket-book, then went forward to meet the black-habited figures, just descending from the foremost of the string of peasants' carts; and began:

"My Sister . . ."

The nun addressed turned a pleasant face upon him, and cried, with a sympathetic clasping of her small, work-roughened hands:

"There is blood on Monsieur! . . . He has been wounded!"

P. C. Breagh explained with economy of words how and where he had been watching the fighting, and whence came the ugly stains upon his clothes. The nun glanced towards the wood, paled and shuddered, and said, making the sign of the Cross upon her starched, cape-like *guimpe*:

"But all cannot be dead who lie bleeding in that *ravin*—the hollow where our poor school-children gather primroses in Spring?"

"I think they must be. The massacre was carried out deliberately. Aimed fire—and there is not a movement—not a groan! . . ."

P. C. Breagh shuddered, remembering the crossing of the red ditch. The nun said with energy, as other black habits and white *guimpes* came crowding round her:

"We must make sure. . . . Each of those bodies must be lifted and examined. Life often lingers, sir, when it seems to have fled. We learned that in the Crimea, when we worked in the base-hospitals of Kamiesch. What of these things?" P. C. Breagh was holding out the portrait, purse, pocket-book, and letters. "You wish our Reverend Mother to take charge of them? They belonged to that dead officer yonder, in the scarlet uniform? He was English, you tell me—and you too are of England? Very well! I am free to decide, as I am the Superior of our community. But I will not receive the valuables at your hands until you have helped us to clear that terrible ravine. We have only our good priest with a few peasants and one surgeon, and some charitable ladies and gentlemen of the Association of the Red Cross. Everyone else is panic-stricken—they have barricaded themselves within their shops and houses, and taken refuge in the cellars. . . . The explosions of cannon have been so terrible—they are becoming yet more alarming, and when the fighting came quite close. . . . Our people are not brave, you think!—Still, everyone cannot be courageous. . . . But, Monsieur, who watches men being killed by guns to gain experience—we may look to Monsieur for help?"

The clear woman-eyes went to the sunbrowned, freckled face of the young man in the travel-worn, dusty, blood-stained clothing and realised that a struggle was going on within him. She said:

"If Monsieur is of necessity compelled to go and leave us, I will take charge of the dead English officer's property

for Monsieur. But a great blessing is for those who succour the wounded. Our Lord has always promised this !"

No one listened to the little colloquy; some of the Sisters were already stooping beside the prone bodies, two of them were helping the vocal Cuirassier into a cart. . . .

With a great longing P. C. Breagh longed to make the ridge south of Flavigny, and see with his own eyes how the Man of Iron comported himself in the clash of war. And to stay behind and forego the possibility, would cost him poignant anguish, but one could not leave the Superior and the Sisters to dabble unaided in that ghastly ravine.

"I will stay, Reverend Mother," he said, with a bow that might have been more clumsy. Next moment Brotherton's property had vanished into a huge pocket hidden somewhere in the black habit. The nun clapped her hands, crying to the peasants:

"Thanks ! thanks ! Come, Antoine, Pichegru, Eloi, Benoit ! Dubois ! To the wood, my friends ! and the hollow, where are many sufferers ! I place you under the orders of this English Monsieur."

XLIV.

Upon that battlefield of Gravelotte, France driven to bay, fought like a royal tigress. How many times the dark-blue Divisions were thrown back in their assault upon positions zoned with death-bellowing cannon and death-barking mitrailleuses, History relates. So murderous was the fire of her chassepôtiers from their densely manned rifle-pits that you could trace Moltke's plans of assault in mounds of dead Uhlan cavalry and long regular swathes of motionless blue objects that had been Schmidt, Schultz, and Kunz. . . .

Yet if the Warlock had said within himself, "*This shall be above all a battle of cavalry,*" it would seem as though the determination had been formed upon the other side.

For this day that saw the death-charge of Von Bredow's brigade upon the Gorze Road—Uhlans, White Cuirassiers, and Dragoons of the Guard, hurled in a solid column of shining steel against French field-batteries and battalions of riflemen—also saw the cavalry of Frossard, of Ladmirault, and Canrobert ride down whole squares of German infantry, who rose again and poured in volleys from the needle-gun, to be beaten down by the storms of leaden hail ground out by the mitrailleuse.

A glaring, coppery sun looked down on those six square miles of fiercely-contested ground. Over its whole expanse there was not one patch as big as a National School playground without its *débris* of arms and accoutrements, its ghastly or ludicrous tokens of war.

In an intermittent lull of the racket you could hear the dry earth, that had been pounded bare of verdure, sucking moisture as though after heavy rain. Only the rain was blood. The faint, sour smell of it came to the nostrils mingled with the smell of burnt gunpowder, human and equine exhalations, and the acrid stifle of burning wood.

For Flavigny was yet smouldering, the farm-buildings at Gorze were burning, Malmaison was a furnace; houses and barns at Vernéville were wrapped in clouds of black smoke shot with lurid flame.

Exhausted battalions, sick and stupefied with slaughter, were lying down amongst the dead and the wounded to snatch a wink of sleep. Others opened their haversacks to snatch a hasty mouthful, or drained their canteens of the last drop. Surgeons were going up and down amongst them, patching up flesh-cuts with lint and diachylon, temporarily plugging bullet-wounds of the minor order. "There!" they would say to the Schmidt, Kunz, or Schultz so treated; "now you are fit for fighting again!"

Perhaps you can see the Man of Iron in his white cuirassier cap, black undress frock with the pewter buttons, and

great steel-spurred jack-boots, standing, grim-jawed and inscrutable behind his King's camp-chair. Through the stress and storm of two long days of hot fighting, that patch of high ground south of Flavigny had been the point to which orderlies and aides-de-camp furiously galloped from every point of the compass, and from which they galloped back in even more desperate haste.

In the rear of the camp-chair, not so close to it as to draw fire, were the King's personal military staff, with a bevy of Princes, and the representative of the British War Office, Colonel ——. Several Councillors and Secretaries of the Chancellor's travelling Foreign Office stood about, stout, gray-haired, important-looking persons in semi-military uniform. The carriages that had conveyed them waited at Tronville. The King's charger and those of the other great personages were in the care of orderlies. The Escort waited by their horses in the background.

Moltke stood apart, taciturn and inscrutable, nursing his thin elbow and cupping his long chin. Roon, who, contrary to his custom, was not wearing his helmet, gloomily champed his cap-strap, unable to disguise his anguish of anxiety. He would have given a year of life to say:

"Old man, so cool in the midst of this hellish slaughter, can it be that you do not know how things really are? . . . Since two of the clock the French have had the best of it! The chassepôt you termed a 'magnificent weapon' has justified your eulogy. The mitrailleuse we despised, not comprehending its terrible capabilities, has revealed them to our undoing. The Army of United Germany bleeds at every pore!"

He wrung at his moustache, the dye upon which had not been renewed recently. His heart swelled with the flood of pent-up speech.

"The Commander-in-Chief's despatches to the Queen

have been cheered in Berlin. Throughout Germany they are hailed with joy. . . . '*France now fights with her back to the Rhine,*' the people say. '*Our Army stands arrayed between Bazaine and Paris!*' It is possible they do not realise that the situation is critical? Have they no suspicion that the tables might be turned?"

He wrung his knotted hands together in torment and the sweat started in gouts upon his livid skin. He could hardly keep back the spate of words:

"Before us the Army of Bazaine—behind us at Chalôns the Army of MacMahon. Were the Duke of Magenta with his recuperated Divisions, to advance energetically and swiftly to the relief of his brother Marshal—could our Crown Prince hold him back? And if he could not, what were our chance worth? . . ."

The sentence had escaped Roon without his knowledge. Moltke's wrinkled visage turned his way. The scarlet-rimmed eyes glittered on him a moment. Roon leaped as the dry voice said:

"Not so much as a pinch of snuff!"

The War Minister stammered:

"Pardon, Your Excellency! You spoke to me? . . ."

Moltke answered quietly:

"I asked if you could spare me a pinch of snuff. My box is empty." He opened the little silver receptacle and turned it upside down, tapping it on his finger-nail: "Neither have I a single cigar!"

Roon had forgotten his cigar-case in quarters. He fumbled for his snuff-box, thought it must be in his cloak. A resonant voice said from behind the King's camp-chair:

"Will Your Excellency take one of these?"

"Why not? why not? If they are not too strong for me. . . ." The Warlock smiled, showing his toothless gums. The Chancellor said, opening and offering the plain green

leather case with the coronetted B. stamped in gilding on it:

"It may be they are stronger than you are accustomed to smoke?"

Moltke's keen, swift glance met the heavy blue stare of the Chancellor. He returned:

"I will answer Your Excellency when I have tested them."

The case held three Havanas of varying merit. Two were good, one super-excellent. The withered hand hovered, paused above them, made selection, while the sharp, glittering glance seemed to say: "*So!* . . . You are trying again the test you put me to at Königgratz! . . . See! I am cool enough to choose the better weed!"

While Bismarck returned the case to his breeches-pocket, mentally commenting:

"Excellent. He is not flustered—he has yet a trump to play!"

Relieved, he returned to his post behind the King's camp-chair, a rugged, powerful figure with the face of a thoroughbred mastiff, unwearyingly keeping guard lest meaner influences should undermine his power, and topple his unfinished life-work down.

Watching the battle through these noonday hours, he had, being a practical soldier as well as a consummate statesman,—known some moments of horrible foreboding. Now his courage revived. The work would be completed. The well-shaped, sun-browned hand lightly resting on the chair-back, would hold all Germany within its iron grip.

The thrill of conscious power transmitted itself to the King, it may be, for he moved impatiently in his seat. Sometimes he must have chafed, the white-haired Hohenzollern chieftain, knowing himself a puppet in the hands of his powerful Minister.

"How they fight! How they fight! *Ach Gott!*" he muttered. "Wouldst thou have credited, Otto, that such fire was left in France?"

And the helmeted head of the old chieftain shook with an uncontrollable nervous spasm. Over it came the scoffing retort:

"It is the heat of fever, the fire of phosphorescence. It will leave them weak and debilitated—it will glimmer out and go black. And yet Bazaine, contemptible as a strategist, has his moments of inspiration. The thrust of the skilled fencer will sometimes puzzle the master of swordsmanship. . . . Frossard and Canrobert are devout Catholics, and no doubt believe in guardian-spirits. They have had a hint, it may be, from some celestial Field-Marshal; St. Louis, possibly, or the Chevalier de Bayard!"

The King murmured, unheeding the jest, his eyes glued to the field-glasses that jerked in his shaking hands:

"Even a victory could not bring my soldiers of the Guard to life again. And there! Dost thou see? . . ."

The Minister turned his own binoculars in the indicated quarter. What remained of a Division of the Prussian 10th Corps, with a brigade of cavalry, Uhlan and Dragoons, was locked in the death-grip with a Cavalry Division of Bazaine's own corps, the Third, on the plain between the Bois de Vionville and Bois de Gaumont. And even the Chancellor's iron hand trembled as with ague, and his breathing harshened perceptibly as he carefully focussed the glasses on the fight. He said after a moment:

"Those three regiments of cavalry on brown horses with green, silver-laced dolmans and red-bagged talpacks are Chasseurs of the Guard Imperial. Fine fellows! They have a man to lead them, it would seem, in that little Colonel with the big paunch."

The Brigadier of the Chasseurs had been killed by a shell, and upon Paunchy had devolved the leadership. Twice he

had led the green dolmans in shattering charges, under the stress of which the dark-blue islands of infantry had hollowed and caved in. Twice he had fought his way out at the head of his shrunken and mutilated squadrons. Now, sweeping round, the Dragoon and Uhlan squadrons had attacked the Chasseurs furiously in the rear.

All that could be seen, even through the binoculars, was a shifting kaleidoscopic jumble of gaily-coloured uniforms. Men's heads and arms rising and falling, flashing swords, flickering lance-pennons, and the crests and hindquarters of plunging beasts. . . . Hence, Kraus, Klaus, and Klein of the blue infantry could not fire into the *mêlée* for fear of shooting their countrymen. Red Breeches hesitated to use his chassepôt on the same count.

About a bushy knoll to the left of the struggle, the German cavalry circled like swallows, greedily assailing a swarm of green and red dragon-flies. The Chasseurs' cartridge-boxes being empty, they used their long sabres as they had used their carbines, coolly and effectively; and Paunchy, lifted above the press by the little knoll referred to, encouraged them with looks and gestures and words.

"Courage, my children! . . . Follow me! . . . Bravo! . . . One moment's breathing-space, and charge at them again!"

He was only a green and scarlet speck in the midst of an aggregation of other specks on the vast battlefield, yet the King and the Minister watched him with fixed regard.

"*Grosse Gott!* How that man fights!" the King muttered at one point in the conflict, and the rejoinder came from overhead:

"He is gallant, certainly, but a bit of an actor. Would not one say that flourish was meant for the ladies in the orchestra-stalls?"

"Because he has kissed a medal or a relic?" the King muttered, tugging at his white whisker. "Doubtless he

is Catholic. . . . We ourselves have many brave soldiers of the Roman faith !"

For as his squadrons ever thinned and dwindled, every instant paying toll to the great swords of the Prussian Dragoons and the blood-thirsty Uhlan lances, they had seen the little Brigadier take from the breast of his green dolman something white, and press his bearded lips to it, and thrust it back again, and sign himself with the Cross.

"*Hurrah Preussen ! Immer vorwärts !*" yelled the Uhlans, as their dripping lance-points flickered in and out between the red-stained sword-blades, and the bodies of dead Chasseurs and dead horses rose in a mound about the knoll where stood the little Brigadier.

Paunchy possessed a great voice. His "*Chargez !*" had reached the ears of the King and his Chancellor through all the pandemonium of battle. When his Staff trumpeter's instrument, bullet-pierced, gave forth no sound but a strangled screeching, the little Colonel's thundering "*Feu!*" needed no aid of brass to make the order plain. Now, his "*Vive la France ! Vive l'Empéreur !*" boomed out like the roar of a dying lion. His melting squadrons gave back the rallying cry.

But they were lost. Prisoned within the ring of piercing steel that tirelessly revolved about them, they could kill, indeed, but they could not break through the barrier. Fresh squadrons rushed with hoarse shouts to the aid of the German cavalry. The Chasseurs were hopelessly outnumbered, and must inevitably be crushed.

The subaltern who bore the Imperial standard got a lance-thrust in the shoulder. At the same moment, his horse was shot dead. As the beast reared in the death-throe and went down under the plunging hoofs of the maddened horses round him, the Colonel leaned from his saddle, seized the hand that gripped the staff of the

standard, drew the fainting officer upwards, and laid him across his own saddle-bow. Then, as his gallant horse braced itself to bear the double burden, the rider lifted high the glistening folds of the tricolour, topped by the golden Imperial eagle, and as the Uhlans charged the knoll he shouted again in terrible tones the slogan of the dying Empire:

"*Vive la France! Vive l'Empéreur!*"

War has many of these sublime moments mingled with her squalid hideousness. Upon this day, many a soldier, French and German, died as finely as the father of Juliette. You are to see him—bareheaded, for the fur talpack with the plume of green and scarlet had been sheared from his head by a glancing sword-cut, lifting a war-flushed forehead to the sky all sunset-red. Then a mortal lance-thrust reached him over the body that lay across his horse's withers, and he reeled upon his saddle, and fell backwards, partly swathed in the Flag for which so many heroes have died.

Through the tricoloured folds yet other Uhlan lance-points reached him. Did any thought of his daughter pass through the brain of the dying soldier between the sharp pangs of the probing steel?

"*My child . . . safe . . . neutral territory. . . . Charles . . . honest man . . . protect my girl from Adelaide! Now . . . death! Ah!—agony! Save, Jesu! . . . Mary, help!*"

A few of his gallant Chasseurs surrendered. But these were only a handful. Nearly the whole strength of his brigade of three regiments lay dead upon that patch of common that was cumbered with their corpses and those of their enemies.

XLV.

Bismarck said, lowering his binoculars:

"Lucky that war is so confoundedly expensive. Otherwise one might get too fond of it!"

The King groaned:

"My Dragoons of the Guard!—my Uhlans, slaughtered in regiments! My Infantry shattered—decimated—annihilated in Divisions. . . . The bravest blood of France—poured out upon French soil like water. . . . Great God! —how shall I defend this carnage to the Queen? . . ."

The resonant voice behind him said, ironically:

"My wife writes me ten pages every three days, urging upon me in Biblical language the necessity for complete extermination of everything French! Believe me, Sire, he who is guided by the advice of a woman, follows, not a Jack, but a Jinny o' Lantern, that will inevitably lead him into a bog!"

The King winced under the gibe, yet he said, striking his clenched hand passionately upon his knee:

"And this shadow that we follow south-west, this vision of a Crown Imperial! What is it but an *ignis fatuus* that had plunged us to the neck in the morass of War? If the whole Army of United Germany sink down in the death-sleep, for what have we offered up the sacrifice?"

The answer came, prompt and authoritative:

"Your Majesty may leave that question to be answered by the sons of these men who lie dead about us, and the sons they shall in their time beget. If your Majesty's whole army must be sacrificed to insure German Unity, let it be so, in the name of Heaven!"

The King tugged again at his white side-whisker and muttered something about "sinful ambition." The hand that had wrenched the curb, now offered sugar. The voice said, mellowed and softened to persuasive tenderness:

"I have served a great King. I aim to serve a great Emperor. If my ambition be sinful, it is at least not base!"

"Ah, Otto!" The King rose, and his hard, yellowish-hazel eyes were full of tears as they met the Minister's. "You have no argument so strong as your disinterested-

ness. For even your bitterest enemies have never questioned that !"

Something took place in the brain behind the great domed forehead hidden by the Cuirassier cap, the fierce, almost challenging stare sank beneath the old man's tearful look of love. The Man of Iron was asking himself: "Am I, then, so disinterested ? . . . If I am, why is it that these words have power to gall me ? Can it be that I have my price as well as others ? I who think myself repaid in Power for what other Ministers will only sell for gold !"

The momentary embarrassment passed. He said, pointing to one of those long blue mounds of dead and dying infantry:

"And who could see our soldiers advance under the fire of these French chassepôts and the terrible mitrailleuses, and doubt that they have understood the greatness of the issue at stake ? Excuse me a moment, Sire ! . . . What is it, Götzow ?"

The *aide-de-camp,* in the full uniform of the Chancellor's own regiment of Cuirassiers, was white as his own coat. He gulped out:

"Excellency, I am charged by His Highness, Prince Augustus of Würtemburg, Commander-in-Chief of the Prussian Guard Corps . . ."

The Chancellor's prominent blue eyes lightened so fiercely upon the speaker, that he began to stammer and boggle in his speech:

"Terrible intelligence . . . only just received by His Highness. . . . Yesterday Your Excellency's sons, Count Herbert and Count William, were in the general cavalry charge which took place at Mars la Tour . . ."

The great soldierly figure standing with the huge spurred boots apart, the hands leaning on the long steel-hilted sword, might have been cast in iron or carved in granite

for all the emotion conveyed by look or gesture. The voice said stridently and harshly:

"The First Dragoons of the Guard were not involved in the struggle. Only the brigades of von Barby, the 4th Westphalian Cuirassiers, the 10th Hussars, and the 16th Dragoons."

The ghastly *aide* faltered, perspiring freely:

"At the moment of General von Barby's charge, it has been unfortunately ascertained, a squadron of Prussian Guard Dragoons of the First Regiment—returning from a patrol, dashed into the *mêlée* . . ."

The Chancellor drew a sharp breath, but stirred not a finger. His fierce eyes, staring from dark pits that had suddenly been dug round them, paralysed the wretched bearer of the tragic intelligence. He asked in a tone that appalled by its tranquillity:

"Have both my sons been killed?"

The *aide-de-camp* got out that it was feared so. He was thanked and charged with a polite message to the Prince. As he saluted and retired, lightened of his tidings of anguish, the Minister focussed his binoculars with a steady hand upon that point towards the northward where the dark bulk of the fortress of St. Privat loomed on a hill-top covered with masses of troops and traversed by a straight white, poplar-bordered road, regularly trenched for musketry. He said in the same tone of composure, though his set face and the hand that held the glasses were wet as though with rain:

"St. Privat still resists, it seems. General Pape, with the Guards' cavalry and the Saxons, will find their work cut out for them, in driving those French battalions out of the village below the hill."

He lowered and wiped the glasses with his handkerchief. The King said entreatingly, laying a hand upon his arm:

"Go, go! Find out the truth about your sons, Bismarck. . . . Leave not a stone unturned, in God's name!"

Even as the King spoke, German drums and trumpets sounded the charge; and there was a sudden shifting of masses of troops in the direction of St. Hubert. Then, as a wave of dark-blue men began to roll out from the deep woods that flanked the village of Gravelotte, so fierce a storm of cannon and mitrailleuse and chassepôt began to beat about their heads that the unseasoned horses of the Princes of the suite kicked and plunged, and the Minister said:

"It would be wise did your Majesty remove out of this neighbourhood. These *bon-bons* thrown by Frossard's artillery are coming much too near."

"I will ride back—I will move out of the way," agreed the old man in great agitation. "But you, Bismarck!—you must go and see about your sons!"

He answered, and his great bloodshot eyes and sagging jowl were more than ever those of a mastiff:

"When I have seen your Majesty in a place of safety I will ask your permission to do so."

An orderly from Steinmetz, who now had his field headquarters at St. Hubert, arrived with an urgent entreaty that the King would at once retire.

The horses were brought. King William and von Roon mounted. The Chancellor's mare had been sent to water; his orderly appeared with her as the King's party rode on. With a hasty word of reproof the Minister swung his great figure into the saddle, but the brawn and bone of his beast had not carried him clear of the threatened spot before a retreating wave of German foot and horsemen swept over it, followed by the thundering gallop of a retreating battery.

It was a *sauve qui peut,* caused by the smashing fire from the French shrapnel and mitrailleuse-batteries, and the practice of the French riflemen entrenched at the

Moscow Farm. A general officer rode through the rout, laying about him with the flat of his drawn sword and swearing horribly, to judge by his bloodshot eyes and purple countenance.

"Hares! *Gottverdammt* hares!" he gasped breathlessly, finding himself face to face with a gigantic officer of Cuirassiers. "A thousand pardons, Excellency! I did not at once recognise you. Surely you will follow his Majesty to the rear?"

"Willingly," said the Chancellor, as a brace of French shells fell and exploded, digging pits in the sandy ground over which the Headquarter Staff had passed. "Only, as shell does not fall twice in the same place, I am waiting to make certain." And, with a knee-touch, he put the brown mare into her stride.

There was a backward surge of disorganised infantry as the huge beast lifted herself over the yawning craters. But she passed through the press by the bore and thrust of her great shoulders, and the beast and the big man she carried were swallowed up in the roaring dusk.

Moltke, the bald-headed war-eagle, remained brooding at his coign of observation upon the verge of the ridge south of Flavigny, his feathers drooping, his shoulders hunched, his sharp hooked beak inclined towards his breast; his red eyes, burning with the battle-lust, staring fixedly from under the wide, hairless brows.

The sun sank in clouds of smoky gold and crimson over that country of copses, ravines, ruddy brown farmhouses, and white villages. Evening came down and dipped her wings in billows of salt-tasting gunpowder smoke, rose-tinged above and beneath by the reflection from the red sky and the red earth. The green Moselle was tinged with blood. Little rivers ran blood, streams and springs became blood. Wells were filled with blood, as in old time under

the rod of the Lawgiver of Israel, and still the battle raged over hill and valley, common and highroad.

Flavigny village still smouldered, Malmaison was burning, houses and barns at Vernéville were wrapped in roaring flames. Yet the gunners of the French batteries at Moscow, Point du Jour, La Folie, and the Quarries of Amanvilliers and Rezerieulles, continued to make practice of the deadliest; and still French cavalry charged the Teuton's dwindling infantry-squares.

Had not a comparatively fresh and vigorous Prussian Army Corps dropped in at the crucial moment, success had hardly crowned the arms of United Germany. They had been marching every day since they quitted the Saar, those solid-thewed Pommeranians of the 2nd Corps, but at Puxieux they had cooked and eaten, and now appeared like giants refreshed.

Not only Steinmetz rode at their head, with their commander Fransecky, but the Warlock in person directed their attack. Battalions that had retired in disorder reformed and rushed back to meet afresh the brunt of battle. Wherever the red eye glittered and the withered finger pointed, fresh swarms of fierce assailants were hurled against the dwindling hosts of France.

Down came the dark, and now St. Privat was burning; the village under the lee of the fort was burning—sending up great columns of livid smoke shot with licking tongues of flame. The day was over. But crackling lines of fire yet outlined the position of the French rifle-trenches; their mitrailleuse-batteries still spat death unwearyingly, as what remained of Bazaine's Army retired in comparative safety to the Fortress of St. Quentin, under cover of that fiery screen.

There the shattered brigades and mutilated divisions clung like swarming wasps, "with plenty of sting in them yet," said Moltke, "and the hive"—meaning the huge

Fortress of Metz—" handy in their rear. But, on the whole," he added, " I am excellently well satisfied. My calculations have worked out correctly. Those Pommeranians of the Second Corps arrived just in time !"

And the veteran galloped joyously as a young trooper of twenty-five, to cheer his King with the good news.

And can you see that other man, to whom Emperors and Kings and Ministers referred when they mentioned Prussia, who outwitted nations in policy and made wars at will, spurring the great brown mare wildly through the weltering darkness, with salt drops of mortal anguish coursing down his granite cheeks ?

" Bazaine's right has been turned by the Saxons, the Guards have smashed his centre, and the Pommeranians of the Second Corps have taken St. Privat and forced the French Army to retreat, leaving Germany master of the field. Success has crowned beyond hope the arms of the Fatherland, but where are the sons who called me father ? . . . Is this Thy judgment upon one through whom so many fathers are sonless, O my offended God ?"

Perhaps he groaned forth such words as these, as he bucketed the great brown mare through the perilous darkness, over roads bestrewn with helmets, swords, and cuirasses, knapsacks, talpacks, forage-caps, and schakos, needle-guns, chassepôts, and camp kettles, as well as the human *débris* of War. The flare of a lantern tied to and swinging from one of the great steel stirrups, threw a treacherous and fitful light upon his road. . . .

Follow him as he ranged from camp and camp, questioning, investigating. . . . It was black night and raining heavily when a gleam of hope dawned upon the man.

The cavalry piquet-officer who had given the clue beheld the great brute and her huge rider vanish in a cloud of their own steam. A furious clatter of hoofs came back

out of the weltering darkness, and as the flaring lantern, gyrating like some captive fiend at the end of its tether, dwindled to a dancing will-o'-the-wisp and vanished, the officer exclaimed:

"*Kreuzdonnerwetter!* he must have a neck like other men. Yet he rides as though it were forged of tempered steel!"

"Who rides? . . . What was that?" asked a brother officer, waking from a doze of exhaustion beside the hissing logs of the rain-beaten watch-fire. He got reply:

"Only the Pommeranian bear ranging in search of his lost cubs." He added: "I was able to tell him that he would find the eldest of them at the field-hospital of Mariaville, upon which he galloped away like mad."

"The field-hospital of Mariaville" proved to be a farm-house on a hill-top near the battlefield of Mars la Tour. Candles stuck in the necks of empty wine-bottles revealed, through the open, unblinded windows, the figure of the surgeon in charge and those of his orderly-assistants passing to and fro.

"Have you a Bismarck here?"

The stentorian shout from the yard made wounded men turn upon their improvised pillows, and brought the head and shoulders of the bibbed and shirt-sleeved surgeon thrusting out of a window on the first floor. A colloquy ensued between the unseen and the medical officer. Presently an arbitrary voice interrupted:

"What do you call severely, but not seriously wounded, man? Describe the casualty clearly, without professional Latin, or too many crackjaw words."

The dressers winked to each other behind the back of the surgeon. He said, supporting himself with one hand against the crazy window-frame, as he thrust his head and shoulders forth into the dripping darkness and gesticulated with a hand that held a probe:

"Excellency, your elder son has received three bullets.

One lodged in the breast of his tunic, another hit his watch, and the third is at present in the upper part of his thigh. I was about to place the patient under chloroform when Your Excellency's call summoned me from his side."

The voice said, with a clang of anger in it:

"You should not have left him had it been the King who called. Go back to him instantly. I am coming up!"

And he came striding in his great jack-boots up the crazy one-flight stair. Ghastly faces of wounded soldiers turned upon their pillows of straw as that gigantic figure filled up the doorway. His shadow, thrown by the flaring tallow-candle flames, loomed portentously on the whitewashed walls. He wore no cloak or overcoat, and dripped as though he had swum, not ridden, through water to his finding; the peak of his field-cap discharged quite a little deluge upon his son's white face as he stooped over the stretcher where the young man lay, and touched his hand, and kissed him on the cheek.

"Never mind. Clean water does no hurt," he said, for he had drawn out his handkerchief to wipe the splash away, and finding it soiled with dust and powder-grime, had returned it to his pocket.

The surgeon returned:

"I wish we had clean water!—it would be above price. But all the springs are fouled with blood, and there are dead French in the courtyard-well."

"They must be got out, and the well cleansed if possible," said the Chancellor. "Meanwhile a temporary supply must be found. . . . What nourishment have you, fit for wounded men?"

The surgeon responded, busy with a cotton-wool chloroform pad:

"Nothing, Excellency, except wine and a little Extract of Liebig."

The Chancellor said harshly:

"Yet this appears to be a farm-house, and I heard the clucking of fowls down below!"

The surgeon, who was a bullet-headed, obstinate East Prussian, and did not relish this sort of hectoring, returned, thrusting out a stubbly under-jaw:

"Excellency, there are certainly fowls in the farmyard. But they are not mine, nor have I money to buy. They belong to the unhappy wretch who owns this place, and has lost everything else."

And he gave back the stare of the fierce eyes that raked him. The Minister began to lisp, an ominous sign:

"Ah, indeed! . . . May I—may I ask where you—where you gained your notions of the code of ethics that should prevail in warfare?"

Said the surgeon, fronting him fairly and squarely:

"Excellency, from my father, who was an honest man!"

Straw rustled under heads that slewed to look at the blunt speaker. There was a long instant's pause. Then the Chancellor thrust his hand into his breeches-pocket, pulled out a five-thaler note, and said, tendering it to the medical officer:

"Kindly pay this to the object of your pity for fifteen fowls at a mark apiece. Now I will keep you no longer from your patient. Good-night to everyone here!"

"Good-night, Excellency!" came in chorus.

He gave his brusque salute and had already reached the threshold, when his son, a colossal, black-haired, brown-skinned young trooper, who lay back upon his stretcher, staring sulkily at the smoke-blackened rafters, or contemplating the twitching bare toes of the leg that bore a tourniquet above the plugged and bandaged wound, started slightly, looked round and called:

"Father!"

"What is it, my dear fellow?"

His great stride took him back to the prone young giant

on the stretcher. Count Herbert said, barely removing his eyes from the ceiling, and speaking in a studiously indifferent tone:

"If you are upset about Bill, sir, there's no need to worry. His horse was shot under him, but he got hold of another. I saw him ride off all right with a wounded comrade behind him. That's all! Good-night!"

The son nodded surlily and resumed his inspection of the ceiling. The sire, who had received the news in silence, went out at the door, stooping under the lintel, his great shoulders rasping the posts on either side. They heard his heavy footsteps pass down the crazy staircase. A curt sentence or two reached them, spoken as he went through the kitchen on his way to the door. Then he was in the yard, loudly calling for an orderly to bring a lantern. An instant, and three revolver-shots cracked in rapid succession, each followed by a significant cackling and squawking. The surgeon, now fitting the cotton-wool pad upon the wire mouthpiece and signing to his assistant to hand him the chloroform, clapped the pad upon the mouth and nostrils of young Bismarck, and said, with a dry chuckle, as he poured the pungent anæsthetic upon the wool:

"His Excellency is having a little sport. All the same, without water, one cannot cleanse wounds or boil hen-broth."

Water arrived an hour later, two barrels-full upon a hand-cart drawn by terrified peasants, behind whom rode a trooper of Uhlans, accelerating their movements with prods of the lance. A general officer had sent the barrels for the use of the wounded at Mariaville. This service rendered to his son, he rode in search of his King.

XLVI.

He found him, with his Staff, not far distant from Rezonville, having returned there when the French cavalry of the Left withdrew after their tremendous charge. The King was reading despatches, seated on a saddle thrown across a wet faggot, beside a smoky watch-fire. The farmstead of Malmaison, now sending up showers of sparks like a set-piece at the end of a display of fireworks, gave light enough by which to read.

Persuaded to take shelter, the old man found it in a deserted hamlet, of which the very name was uncertain, so sorely had it been mauled about. A crust of stale bread and a mutton-chop grilled on some wood-embers furnished his supper. Water fit for drinking being unattainable, he tossed off a nip of sutler's rum out of a broken tulip-glass, and lay down in his clothes to rest upon the royal ambulance, within four walls and under a roof holed and gapped by shot and shell.

The Princes of the Suite, much to their Highnesses' chagrin, were compelled to subsist on fragments of stale sandwiches from their holster-cases. The escort bivouacked about the Royal lodging. Troops, wearied to exhaustion by the two days' continuous fighting, lay down to sleep in the pouring rain.

The Warlock supped with his personal Staff on ration-biscuit and raw bacon, and spent the night by a bivouac-fire, amongst the living and the dead. Can you see him sitting on the empty ammunition-box, buttoned in his dripping waterproof, his scanty meal eaten and his cigar well alight? . . . How contentedly he listens whilst the bulbul Henry sings, without notes of accompaniment, his moving ballads. How piously he rises, bares his old head,

and joins in the robust hymn sung by his battered but victorious legions, "Now thank we all our God . . ."

Or, with the mind's eye, one can follow the Man of Iron as, having bidden his master good-night and left the young Hereditary Grand Duke of Mecklenburg to keep guard over the royal carriage, he set out, in company of his cousin Bismarck-Bohlen, a lieutenant of Dragoon Guards and one of the minor Councillors of the Embassy, in search of a lodging until break of day.

Sheridan, the famous American General, representing the United States with the Prussian Headquarters Staff, a short, alert gentleman of forty-five, with a dark moustache and chin-tuft, and a pronounced Yankee twang, followed, begging leave to accompany the expedition. The first cottage approached as likely to afford a night's shelter was found to be on fire:

"Too hot, though I like warm quarters!" the Chancellor commented. The next house was found crammed with wounded soldiers, all suffering from the excellent shell-practice made by the gunners of General Frossard. The next house and the next had also been converted into field-hospitals. The fourth yielded to the Minister's personal investigations a vacant attic, with three truckle-beds, provided with straw palliasses, tolerably clean.

Sheridan and Bismarck-Bohlen threw themselves upon their rude beds and very soon were soundly sleeping. For a little while the Man of Iron stood beside the narrow unglazed window in the attic gable, his great arms folded on his broad breast, his eyes, inflamed and strained with gazing through the fire and smoke of bombardments, looking out into the wild black welter of the rainy night.

Those torn-up pastures and plough-acres, those devastated cornfields and woodlands, those burning farms and villages of Lorraine lay in comparative quiet now. . . . The hellish roar and crash and tumult of War had ceased

for the time being. Its ghastly sights were veiled, for the most part, by merciful darkness, though the innumerable little sputtering fires kindled by the soldiers threw fitful illuminations upon grotesque, or strange, or terrible, or indescribably hideous things. . . .

Hungry, thirsty, weary, and saddle-sore as any trooper of his own White Cuirassiers was the Man of Iron, having broken his fast at dawn upon a hunch of bread and bacon-fat, and supped upon a couple of raw hen's eggs, broken on the pommel of his big steel-hilted sword. But as his bloodshot eyes looked upon his handiwork, he was contented. This huge, vehement, and gory conflict had established the mastery of Germany: France was outnumbered, out-generalled, and out-fought.

With frightful loss Moltke had attained his premier object. The Army of MacMahon had been driven in rout to Chalôns, the retreat of Bazaine's Army westward had been effectually checked. The south road from Metz to Verdun, hitherto lightly held by the advance-patrols of the Prussian Crown Prince, was now blocked by the whole effective strength of two out of the three armies of Germany; weakened, wounded, and bleeding after the two days of desperate fighting, but still powerful, menacing, and grim.

One desperate effort made at this juncture might have broken through the barrier of living flesh and steel. Would it be made, or would the French Army of the Rhine fall into the snare so cunningly left open, and retire within the fortified area of Metz ?

The gable-attic looked towards the great fortress. In vain his glasses swept the formless blackness. The sparkle of a moonbeam on a bayonet-point,—the green or crimson ray cast by a Staff lantern moving over the ground yet screened by the French batteries, might have cleared the point in doubt. Save for the sputter of German watch-

fires over the recent field of battle, and the yellow candle-flare in the windows of half-ruined cottages and outbuildings, where wounded men lay on straw or the bare earth, no light showed, no life seemed to be. . . . He swung the shattered casement wide, and thrust his head out, gripping the window-sill, intently listening. . . . No distant roll of iron-shod wheels, no reverberating tread of countless footsteps; no other sounds, such as might betray the retreating movement of an armed host, broke the silence of that tragic night.

Only the sob of the wind and the dripping of the chill rain from the overflowing roof-gutters, came to him, with the deep ruckling snores of exhausted Divisions, and the strangling coughs and hollow groans of mangled and dying men and beasts.

All would be well, he told himself, as he shut up the glasses, unbuckled his sword-belt, and unhooking his collar, stretched himself in his great boots upon the groaning truckle-bed, his heavy revolver ready to his hand. Moltke's great plan would be successful. . . . The King would once more prove his Chancellor a true prophet. . . . The hand that could build up Prussia from a fourth-rate State into a world-power, would yet hold the German Empire in its grip of iron, and through that Empire rule the world!

If He Who created the World had been displeased by Bismarck's ambitions, things would have gone less smoothly from the outset. . . . If He Who wrought man in His Image had been moved to wrath by all this bloodshed, He would have shown it by letting something happen to the boys. . . .

But Bill was safe, while Herbert was only slightly wounded. To-morrow he should be brought back to the hospital at Pont à Mousson, and thence invalided home.

Reverting to Bill, secretly the father's idol, in whose

person he saw his own lost youth renewed, the Chancellor smiled now, painting in imagination on the darkness a picture of that charge of the French square at Mars la Tour. According to Herbert, who had put the thing baldly, Bill had had his horse shot, and jumped on another, taking a comrade behind him as he rode off the field.

A fine story to write home to the brave boy's mother. . . . How her deep eyes would glow and kindle as she read. . . . An exploit with which to dazzle fat Borck, hated keeper of the King's Privy Purse. . . . Nor must one omit to embody the incident in the next official communication penned to Count Bernstorff, Prussian Ambassador in London, who would be sure to retail it to some Lady-in-Waiting possessing the ear of the Queen. Lastly, what a magnificent anecdote for the convivial stage of a Foreign Office Staff dinner, or an official banquet, related with spirit, garnished with exaggerations of the pardonable, harmless kind. Indeed, with such embellishments he subsequently related the slight episode, proving himself capable of the very folly of paternal tenderness. The picture cropped up constantly among his dreams on this wild night of Gravelotte. And when the wan-faced Dawn peeped shuddering between her blood-stained curtains, and the reveille sounded, waking the living from their sleep amongst the dead, so that their haggard uprising seemed as though in answer to the trump of the Archangel of the Resurrection,—he heaved his giant's frame from the squalid bed to learn, with a savage thrill of exultation, that Bazaine had fallen into the trap.

In the dead of night, behind the screen of the unsilenced French batteries yet emplaced behind the high-walled farms of Montigny la Grange, La Folie, and from thence to Point du Jour, the bleeding Army of the Rhine had retreated to the treacherous shelter offered beneath the guns of Metz.

Said the Warlock, smiling in his sunniest manner as he made his hasty morning toilet in the shelter of a baggage-waggon tilt:

"Three French Marshals are twittering in this birdcage on the Moselle—one Army has been shut up with them. Another yet remains at large, with Paris and the huge resources of France in rear of it." He paused to absorb a pinch of snuff and extract a clean white shirt from a small and shabby japanned tin field-case, then added: "A France on the point of Revolution,—an Army commanded by MacMahon, who has been badly beaten, and has that Old Man of the Sea, the Third Napoleon, sitting on his back wherever he goes!" He put on the shirt and emerged from temporary obscurity to finish. "If the spirits of the just be permitted knowledge of earthly matters, my beloved wife Mary is pleased with her old man!"

And he equipped himself in his old war-harness, and crowned his old wig with his battered war-helm, and got on his fine charger and rode off to meet and confer with his King, the Chancellor, and the War Minister, and issue instructions to his Chiefs of the various Staffs, trolling even less tunefully than usual, another verse of his favourite song:

> "*And knew they, the shining starlets above me,*
> *Of the bitterness of my woe,*
> *They would come down and bid her love me,*
> *Pleading: 'Ah! do not scorn him so!'*"

XLVII.

Rumour had it that the King, the Chancellor, Roon, the Royal Staff, and the Tinsel Rabble, with the escort of red, blue, and green Hussars, Guard-Dragoons and Uhlans had ridden towards Flavigny.

The Warlock placidly followed, traversing the battle-

field near Rezonville. Here bearer-parties of the German Ambulance Service, with Red Cross helpers, Knights of St. John, volunteers and French and German surgeons wearing the Geneva badge were now arriving; and some progress had already been made in the gigantic task of separating the wounded from the dead.

The Iron Chancellor was found here, attended by his shadow, Bismarck-Bohlen, sometimes dubbed "The Little Cousin," other whiles "The Twopenny Roué," according to the humour of his powerful relative. The Minister was glancing through the morning's letters, his cousin was reading him extracts from the *Daily Telegraph*, a parcel of English papers having arrived. Hard by, squads of fatigue-men, aided by bloused peasants, were working to finish the second of two parallel trenches, in length some three hundred feet, near which had been collected a huge mass of French and German corpses, many half-naked, the majority of them still in uniform. Carts lumbering up with fresh loads to discharge, continually augmented the terrible mound of bodies, a huge percentage hideously displaying the effects of shell-fire, many in the initial stages of decomposition, hastened by the sweltering and oppressive heat.

Soldiers went about with huge canvas sacks, filling these with zinc identification-tags taken from the necks of their dead comrades, gathering a harvest of watches and purses, the former sometimes of such value, and the latter occasionally so well-filled with French money as to suggest that they had previously been taken from the dead.

"*Ach Himmel!*" the perplexed officer of Pioneers in superintendence of the trenching-party kept saying: "More, more, and still more. . . . What is one to do with so many dead men?"

Some utterance of this kind reaching the ears of the Chancellor, he turned in his saddle and called to the officer:

"Your trench is too deep, sir, and not half wide enough. Three feet is sufficient. Lay them in as cooks dispose herrings in oil-pickle, across in layers and not singly and lengthways — labour and space will be economised thus."

"Alas, Excellency!" protested the officer, "will not such a method be very unwholesome? The churchyard at Flauville is already raised four feet above the pavement of the church."

"Let them lay on fresh dead," said the Chancellor, smiling grimly, "and stop when they reach to the level of the window-sills. Thus our good fellows will be able to listen to the Curé's Sunday address. Meanwhile, bury thick!" He observed, as Moltke rode up, pointing to the ground now trodden into mud and littered with French schakos and képis, Prussian helmets and schapkas, knapsacks, arms, underclothing, accoutrements, brushes, razors, and shoes: "Would not one call this 'Death's Rag Fair'?" Then, as the wind, blowing over a battery of dead horses brought with it an odour that made the senses reel, he added; "Or 'Death's Perfumery Shop' would be as appropriate a title. . . . I must advise the King not to breathe this atmosphere longer, fasting. It might result in dysentery."

Moltke agreed, expanding his thin nostrils: "Truly, the effluvium is exceedingly bad!"

"Hypocrite!" said the Chancellor, openly laughing. "Do we not all know that the bouquet of a battle-field covered with slain enemies is sweeter to you than November violet-blooms."

"Both may be agreeable," said the old war-eagle, "in different fashion; as the partition of a conquered province, and the dismemberment of a truffled capon might afford pleasure of two kinds to Your Excellency."

Said Bismarck, as his cousin reined back and joined the

modest personal staff of Moltke, following at some distance in the rear of the Commander-in-Chief:

"I prefer the first, if the second appeals to my empty stomach. Though we must not sell the bear's skin, before we have killed the bear!"

He went on, patting the sweating neck of the brown mare, who had winced and started as yet another dead-cart shot out to windwards its dreadful load. . . .

"The King has been in favour of keeping the country up to the Marne. I have yet another idea, which may be too Utopian to realise. A kind of German colony,—a neutral State of eight or ten million inhabitants, free from the conscription, and whose taxes should flow to Berlin. France would thus lose a district from whence she draws her best soldiers—one would cut her claws thus!"

Said Moltke, his clear eyes narrowing in merry wrinkles:

"And draw her teeth as well!"

The Chancellor went on:

"That the annexation of the piece of territory will give belly-ache to the French is a matter of no consequence. Revenge should be made impossible. Even without annexation, we must render these vipers permanently harmless before we risk their bite. The surrender of the eastern fortresses of France can alone serve our purpose. We have bought them with the best of our German blood!"

Agreed the Warlock: "Many noble Prussian families will be plunged in mourning. Wesdehlen and Reuss, Wedell and Finkenstein have been killed—Rahden is most grievously wounded, and a whole crowd of officers commanding regiments or battalions are either badly hurt or dead. I can but thank Divine Providence that I have suffered no personal bereavement."

"I echo your thanksgiving," responded the Minister, "though some pints of my own blood have vicariously been shed."

"I had heard—I had heard somewhat, but feared to touch upon the matter," said the Warlock. "With the younger olive-branch they tell me all is well!"

The Chancellor answered, stammering slightly and looking straight in the eyes of the other:

"Bill rode off the field in safety, carrying two unhorsed comrades out of the leaden hailstorm, one in each stirrup, Cossack-fashion, and accommodating a th—a third on the crupper of his horse!"

"*Ei—ei!* I had not heard these interesting particulars," exclaimed Moltke, raising his hairless brows in apparent astonishment. "I did not know the brave young man had distinguished himself so much! The Countess will overflow with pride and gratitude. . . . She writes regularly, I think Your Excellency told me? Naturally she would be solicitous for your health."

"I had a letter from her yesterday," returned Bismarck, "in which she mingles in equal doses, stern admonition and affectionate advice. Thus, I am to avoid the French wines, which are known to be gout-provoking, and be sure to return in time for the celebration of our wedding-day. . . . While, remembering, however strongly Paris may be fortified, that the walls of Jericho fell down when the trumpets of Joshua were sounded—I am to give your Excellency no peace, 'until the modern Babylon is utterly destroyed.'"

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Warlock laughed with boyish merriment, until the water stood in his clear, keen eyes. "Her Excellency, as I have often told thee, Otto, possesses a personality of the antique order. She is of the breed of Judith and Zenobia. . . . I would also say Boadicea, but for the Countess's known antipathy to the British race. So we are to destroy Paris, and what of the Bonapartes and Bourbons and Orleans? . . . Have we, then, no cut-and-dried instructions as to what is to be done with these?"

The Chancellor returned, with immovable gravity of tone and feature, belied by the amusement dancing in his eyes:

"We are to purge France of the whole lot of them. Though—supposing the Prince Imperial were to complete his education at a German University, and thus attain to manhood surrounded by German influences,—Monseigneur Lulu might one day become a subaltern in our Prussian Army—subsequently to completion of the customary period of service in the ranks!"

"Capital! Her Excellency is indeed a woman in a thousand." And Moltke fairly rocked in his saddle with laughter, finally having recourse to the frayed cuff of his old uniform field-frock for the mopping of his overflowing eyes. "Thou must paint for the King," he gasped, "that picture of Lulu as a Prussian private soldier. Do not fail to tell him—it will be sure to make him laugh."

Said the Chancellor, shrugging his great shoulders:

"He has ridden with Von Roon and the Tinsel Rabble in the direction of Flavigny, where the French bombardment so greatly endangered him yesterday. Von Roon will be pouring into the royal ear dismal details of our losses, which are to be estimated for the Berlin newspapers at something under twenty thousand, including officers."

"Seventy thousand would be nearer the mark," said the Warlock placidly. "Nor do I regard it as a heavy price for such a victory as we have won. Roon, however, is not to be envied an unpleasant duty, which, for my own part, I prefer, when possible, to leave to other mouths than mine."

And leaving the battle-field they struck into a road in a gravel cutting leading east towards Flavigny, and bordered with cottages shattered and scorched by shell-fire, most of them standing in gardens gay with dahlias, sunflowers, snapdragons, marigolds, lavender, and phlox. Every house

that boasted a roof was full of wounded French and German soldiers, most of them lying on bare boards or earthen floors. Oaths and cries of anguish came from kitchens that in virtue of their solid tables had been converted into operating theatres; ambulance-assistants emptied buckets of ensanguined water over the gaily-coloured flower-beds, while bare-armed surgeons, in blood-stained aprons, came to the doors every other moment to cool themselves, or fill their lungs with draughts of cleaner air.

"It is sad to see all this suffering," remarked the Chancellor, "or would be, did one not know it unavoidable!"

Said the Warlock, smiling cheerfully:

"Blood and wounds, dying men and dead men, are the inseparable concomitants of War. One takes them then as natural, and pays no heed to them. Did armies fight with truncheons of sausages, and dumplings stuffed with plums instead of iron shells full of shrapnel, there would still be plenty of deaths."

The Chancellor said, laughing heartily:

"And the Field equipment of our Army surgeons would consist of calomel and rhubarb-pills. Here now are a collection of soaked macaws and paroquets. The fine feathers of the Napoleon's Guard Imperial have suffered badly from last night's rain."

In two fields right and left of the road they followed were crowded nearly four thousand French prisoners, under a heavy guard of Mecklenburg infantry. The Mecklenburgers were drinking their morning coffee and munching Army bread and raw ham rations. The emerald, pale blue, and scarlet Imperial Dragoons and Cuirassiers, the white-mantled, red-fezzed Chasseurs d'Afrique, the green-coated Chasseurs à cheval, the gorgeous Guides and Lancers, the Voltigeurs, and the red-breeched, blue-coated grenadiers belonging to individual regiments, standing as if in the ranks, or lying down in groups upon the muddy ground

where they had spent the last night, looked with hollow eyes of famine upon their munching jailers, but disdained to ask for food.

"They are wet," said Moltke, "for few of them have got their greatcoats. It is the love of display that leads the French soldier to throw away what extra weight of covering he carries when he is in the thick of a *mêlée*, or suddenly called upon to charge. While our stout fellows will come out of an assault with what they carried into it."

"Or perhaps a little more!" hinted the Chancellor.

"It may be—it may be!" chuckled the Field-Marshal. "The French love for gold-carrying is the cause of that enrichment. Hence most of their Guard Cavalry officers carry beneath their tunics or in the pockets of their tight pantaloons netted purses given them by their women, that stick out in a tempting style. A prod of our German lance, or a rip from the bayonet, and out pops the purse into the soldier's fist. Thou wouldst not call him a thief for taking what he finds in this manner?"

"I cannot answer for myself," said the Chancellor, turning a laughing look upon the speaker, "but I can safely predict that my wife would exonerate him upon Scriptural authority. By the way, I see that your brigadiers have not thought it worth while to place the French wounded under surveillance." He pointed to a halting procession of roughly bandaged casualties in torn and muddy uniforms, saying: "I have already passed at least a thousand of these limping fellows in red breeches, and of course there must be thousands more."

"How could they escape?" asked the Warlock, turning his ascetic, hairless face upon the speaker. "And did they succeed in doing so, of what use would they be as combatants? All these you see, have they not been wounded by shell-splinters in the head or arms, or hit in the legs and feet by our rifle-bullets? Why should we burden

ourselves with the maintenance of men who cannot fight against us? and must be helpless burdens upon their country even were they within the French lines?"

"I admit the clearness of your Excellency's judgment," said the Minister, "even while I doubt whether, if some of these red-breeched rascals happen to be in possession of concealed weapons—there would not be an excellent opportunity, at this moment, for ridding France of Bismarck or Moltke?"

"Or both," the Warlock amended, "with the aid of a double-barrelled pistol. Look there! Was ever a more startling likeness between a dead man and a living, than is presented at this moment before Your Excellency and myself?"

And returning the salute of a young soldier in the white-faced blue uniform of the Guards Infantry, who in the act of galloping past upon a powerful if wearied beast, had checked his stride so as not to splash mud upon the Chancellor and the great Field-Marshal, Moltke signed to him to halt:

"That he is a relative of Max Valverden's," said Bismarck, "I would have wagered you a dozen of Moselle, of Comet vintage, if Your Excellency were not already inclined to bet on the relationship."

"I never bet," chirped Moltke, "except in boxes of chocolate, and gloves with my nieces, and then it is a matter of certainty beforehand that the little girls are going to win!" And he turned his narrow, glittering gaze upon the object of his curiosity, who was now fixed in the front attitude of attention, immovable as an equestrian statue of painted stone.

"I will not detain you upon what is no doubt a pressing errand," said the Chief of the Great Staff, smiling amiably in the Guardsman's rigid countenance. "I merely wished to ask your name, and why it is that a private soldier

of Guard Infantry happens to be riding an officer's horse ?"

"Pardon, General Field-Marshal !" The statue blushed becomingly. "My name is Carl Bernhard von Schön Valverden, at the service of Your Excellency. Of my rank in the Army I am hardly at this moment certain, as I was promoted Corporal and Sergeant yesterday, during the action of the Guard at St. Privat and Amanvilliers, and am now acting temporarily as junior Captain of my company, nearly all our officers having been killed."

"I congratulate you, Sergeant !" rejoined the Field-Marshal cordially, "and am glad that you, as successor to the family honours of an officer who served the Prussian Army with distinction, seem likely to follow in the steps of your relative. Prut !—that was a close thing !"

"Hellishly so !" agreed the Chancellor.

For the flushed and laughing face of Valverden had suddenly hardened and sharpened. With lightning quickness he had drawn a revolver from a pouch strapped to his belt, and fired across the withers of the big brown mare bestridden by the Man of Iron. As the single shot rang out, another followed almost instantly; and the midmost of three dismounted French Lancers, their heads, legs, and arms swathed in clumsy, blood-stained bandages, who had halted to rest by the side of the muddy road, yelled shrilly and pitched heavily backwards, dropping, with the broken pair of clothes-props that had served him as crutches, a cavalry holster-pistol that had exploded as it fell.

Said Valverden, stiffening his features in the endeavour to disguise his almost passionate elation: "Your Excellencies will pardon me, but I saw the fellow was dangerous. . . ."

"He might with reason," the Chancellor answered, "have entertained a similar idea of you !" He turned to Moltke, saying imperiously:

"Will not Your Excellency now give orders that the companions of these would-be assassins—all upon the road who have witnessed the attempted outrage—shall be shot without delay? It strikes me also that more stringent precautions must be taken with regard to disarming wounded prisoners. The man had a pistol—that goes for much!"

"Certainly—certainly!" agreed Moltke, beckoning to an *aide* of his small Staff who followed at some distance. He issued some brief directions, speaking in an undertone, then said, smiling and turning to Valverden:

"The late Count Max was an excellent marksman with the pistol. You seem to have inherited this talent of his!"

The Chancellor added, looking at the still smoking revolver: "You have there a pretty little weapon, not the arm newly issued to our Guards officers, but apparently of American make!"

"It is one of Colt's six-shooters," said Valverden, smiling. "I bought it from a non-commissioned officer quite recently, and have practised with it in the trenches at the animate mark. But of the ammunition I got with it all has been expended save six cartridges, one of which I have had the honour to dedicate to the service of Your Excellencies."

Both the Excellencies laughed, Moltke saying:

"It would be a pity to spoil your shooting, Sergeant Count von Schön Valverden, for want of a few cartridges. Give me the calibre of your weapon and I will engage to supply you with a hundred or so. And, as to your promptitude may be owed the priceless life of Count Bismarck; the silver-sword-knot must be the reward."

"Thanks, thanks! Your Excellency!" stammered Valverden, grasping the offered hand of the old warrior.

"And the King shall hear how important a service his

newly-promoted officer has rendered him," appended the Chancellor, "in preserving to the Throne and nation of Prussia the greatest of living strategists!"

"Under Divine Providence," said Moltke, devoutly raising his forage-cap.

"Under Divine Providence," repeated the Chancellor, slightly touching the peak of his own.

He added, as Valverden, dismissed by a wave of the Chief's finger, his blue eyes blazing, his blonde face aglow with triumph, set his borrowed spurs to the flanks of his late Captain's charger, and with a showy bound and demi-volte, galloped furiously away:

"He is as vain as Count Max, but seems to possess more character. I prophesy he will go far!"

Moltke agreed, slightly glancing after the flying horseman:

"Far—if Heaven preserve him from the clutches of such women as Adelaide de Bayard! Wouldst thou believe, Otto, the she-fiend spread her nets to catch that youngster, who out of dare-devilry prevailed on an officer of her acquaintance to take him to her house?"

"So!" Bismarck turned his large eyes on the withered eagle-face. "Did the meeting ripen into intimacy?"

Moltke replied:

"Sufficiently so to cause Valverden's family acute apprehension. One would suppose that she first revolted, then attracted, then charmed. . . . The Countess, in the anguish of maternal solicitude, wrote a letter to the Colonel of Valverden's regiment. . . . Fortunately the call to Active Service diverted the young man's thoughts elsewhere."

Bismarck said, smiling and smoothing his heavy gray moustache with his ungloved right hand:

"And, happily, for her intended victim, an accident befell the sorceress, which blunted some of the arrows in her quiver of irresistible charms!"

XLVIII.

"Sad, sad! I had not heard. How did it happen?" asked Moltke, wrinkling his brows inquiringly.

"Briefly, the affair, as its details have reached me, sums up in this way. Straz, the Roumanian agent of the Emperor Napoleon having performed his mission to Prince Antony of Hohenzollern, met Madame de Bayard at a Sigmaringen hotel. . . . She is as clever and light-fingered as she is, or was, beautiful——"

"I know, I know!" said Moltke. "She sucked Straz dry of his store of Imperial secrets, but how, I did not hear from Your Excellency."

Returned the Chancellor:

"By drugging him—or so he vows! she obtained those copies of his instructions from the Emperor (with copies of *his* copies of the telegrams sent by Prince Antony)—which I was privileged to show you later on. Subsequently, and in floods of artificial tears, she awakened her victim, declaring she must return that instant to Berlin. Which she did—a special engine having been kept under steam at the Sigmaringen railway station—in time to place the papers in the hands for which they were destined. The exquisite point of the jest is that Straz accompanied her—subsequently discovering how roundly he had been befooled! But upon this point I am not certain. . . . I only argue from the premises, that when Delilah was subsequently found gagged, half-strangled, and robbed in her bedroom at the hotel where she and her Roumanian had put up—Straz—who had vanished—was the perpetrator of what Madame has since termed 'a mysterious outrage.'"

"He took the money?" Moltke queried.

"Undoubtedly he took the money, which Bucher had paid her a few hours previously. Twenty thousand thalers

in honest Prussian bank-notes. Some of them Straz changed before he left Berlin. He is now here in France, and that is all I care to know of him at present. But in the eyes of every man she now encounters, Madame will read something that will keep her animosity alive."

"So changed, is she?" asked Moltke, with interest.

"So changed is she, in spite of the aid of cosmetics, that as I looked at her I was minded to exclaim with the Prophet Ezekiel: '*Devourer of men . . . thou shalt devour men no more!*'"

The speaker added:

"Unless vicariously, for the de Bayard has a daughter—not destitute of charms, if there be truth in the description given me by her mother, when the woman offered, for a consideration, to sell the girl to me!"

"Prut!" said Moltke, reddening angrily and frowning. "Decency demands that such vileness be kept hid!"

Said the Chancellor, shrugging indifferently:

"Decency and such women as Max Valverden's ex-mistress have long ceased to be on nodding-terms. To do Madame justice, she flew at higher game than a mere Prussian Minister. Her idea was to influence a future Emperor, in the person of Badinguet's heir."

Moltke wrinkled up his transparent, arched nostrils as though an unpleasant odour had afflicted them:

"*Pfui!*—what beastliness! what abomination! And the boy but fifteen, and childish for his age!"

"And cleanly of habit and thought," added Bismarck, "considering his paternity, and the sort of people who habitually surround him." He turned in his saddle as carbine-shots rang out in the distance behind them, saying: "The gendarmery of the Mecklenburgers are carrying out your orders in a general *battue*. It should be enforced as an iron rule, never to be infringed or departed from, that not only those soldiers, reduced to the level of non-combatants,

who attempt to revenge the misfortunes of their Army by acts of violence,—but those who witness such acts are to be instantly shot. More, the rule should extend to private persons: I would without mercy shoot or hang all those who do not treat as sacredly inviolate the persons of their conquerors !"

His deep-cut nostrils expanded, his prominent blue eyes blazed under the heavy eyebrows, the corners of his mouth clamped downwards, giving to the thick moustache a certain appearance of solidity, typical of the man, and suggesting a human mask carved in granite, or cast in bronze and coloured with the hues of life. His resonant voice had the clang and timbre of a war-gong, forged of metal tempered by Pagan priests in blood of human victims. And he went on, his clenched right hand beating the measure of his words upon his solid thigh:

" I speak from the inner depths, at the promptings of a profound conviction. Strictness — unmerciful strictness should be wielded, to bring home to the innocent and the guilty, the feeble as well as the powerful, the horror and hideousness of War. And yet "—his voice assumed a milder tone, the sombre frown relaxed, and the tense corners of the deep-cut mouth twitched a little: " And yet wilt thou credit that during the frightful carnage of the last two days, there have been moments when my bowels melted to water—when Pity and Compunction have gripped me by the throat ?"

" *Ach-ach !*" ejaculated Moltke, turning his clear red-rimmed eyes wonderingly upon the heavy features whose ruddy colour had faded to gray: " Thou wast unfed, or hadst made some rough soldier's meal that disagreed with thee. Man's stomach will upon such occasions chide with the very voice of Conscience. Unavoidable horrors need not cause twinges. Besides, pity and compunction are felt by my niece Gusta when she has trodden upon her lapdog's

tail. . . . I am myself agitated by these sentiments when Gusta exhibits to me her chilblains. . . . In War—especially a recklessly provoked war of attack, such as this, neither pity or compunction can be felt. Grief of heart, I have been hitherto spared by Heaven's gracious preservation of those dear to me. Thou art nearly as favoured, for the wound of Herbert is comparatively slight, and Bill—the hero of the astonishing episode thou hast related—has come off the field not only with four—I think Your Excellency mentioned four—rescued comrades, but without a scratch upon his skin ?"

The simple, serious, almost childish tone of his harangue brought back the thunderclouds to the forehead of the Man of Iron. His grim mouth set, his bulldog jaw thrust forward, a dull cloud of red swept upwards to his temples, chasing the sickly grayish hue. He said, stammering in his characteristic manner:

"Your Ex—Your Excellency and myself have, as you say, been spared the bereavement which will presently plunge the noblest Prussian families into mourning. But Heaven—looking down upon the Gorze Road, now white with the bodies of von Bredow's Cuirassiers—or contemplating the field of Mars la Tour, heaped with the corpses of our Guard-Dragoons and Uhlans—might be inclined to disclaim arch-responsibility for the orders that in one instance hurled suss—six Prussian squadrons upon a French infantry Division and the combined strength of Frossard's batteries, and in the other, pitted against eight regiments of French Imperial Guard Cavalry, von Barby's Heavy Brigade."

"*Ei !*" said Moltke, placidly ignoring the irony, but with a rosy heightening of the colour in his wrinkled cheeks: "And Heaven would be in the right of it. Von Alvensleben in the first case, General Voights-Rhetz in the second, had been told in such and such an emergency to

do thus—and thus. In the Wars of Joshua and David, as recorded in Holy Scripture, Heaven assumed the chief generalship. In the War of Germany with France, in this year of 1870, Heaven is pleased to let Moltke have his own way!"

Verbal thrusts and riposte had the grind of edged steel on edged steel. The Chancellor returned with elaborate suavity:

"And yet—I quote Your Excellency's own utterance, such use of cavalry as I have quoted has been condemned by Moltke as unjustifiable."

"And Moltke was right," trumpeted the indomitable veteran, "only you have not quoted him right. Such use of cavalry by a general is unjustifiable. Unjustifiable—absolutely—unless he wins!" He added, plainly nettled by the Chancellor's criticism:

"Here we part, as I ride towards Gorze to visit the scene of von Bredow's brilliant exploit, in the course of which, though Your Excellency has omitted to mention it, the French battery was cut to pieces, and an infantry column ridden down. Thus the loss of life in a military sense weighs nothing against the advantage!"

And stiffly returning the Minister's salute, the Warlock galloped away.

* * *

"I have trodden on Moltke's corns," said Bismarck, laughing, as his cousin Bismarck-Bohlen rode up to join him. "He grew testy on being twitted with our losses in cavalry." He added, as the low hedges bounding the road vanished, and the arena of the previous afternoon's conflict opened before them: "There is the King, whose face Roon has lengthened with tremendous lists of losses on our side. It will now be my business to shorten the royal countenance again. Roon and I resemble Ixel and Axel in the child's story-book, only that we manage better

on the whole!" He explained as his cousin professed ignorance of the legend: "Ixel and Axel were possessed of a magical birth-gift, which worked in the same way, but differently. . . . Thus, Axel had a little finger that stirred sweet, while Ixel's stirred sour, only neither could remember to use his gift properly. So, Ixel would sour the coffee in the pot, spoil the beer, and turn the jelly in the house-mother's pipkins, while Axel would stir the sauer-kraut sweet and make sweet calf's head with cabbages!" He added, laughing: "If a dish thus flavoured were now set before me, I should certainly make short work of it. Save for a bowl of the soldier's pea-soup given me by General von Goeben this morning,—my stomach would now be as empty as the inside of Louis Napoleon's head!"

The scene of the Homeric battle of the previous afternoon, watched by the King, Bismarck, Roon, and Moltke from the ridge south of Flavigny, was indescribable. Blue Prussian infantry, mingled with Uhlan lancers, Dragoons, and mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard, covered the wide stretch of level common-ground between the Bois de Vionville and the Bois de Gaumont. So high were piled the bodies of dead men and dead horses, mingled with that sorrowful *débris* of shattered arms, scattered accoutrements and ownerless headgear, that live men walked through narrow lanes and crevasses opening here and there among them, and failed to reach the surface at the full stretch of the arm.

Bearer-sections of the German Ambulance were looking for survivors, burial-parties were collecting the German dead. Here and there the narrow lanes that ended nowhere had become crooked thoroughfares, owing to these efforts and the labour of bands of volunteers and peasants working under the Red Cross.

P. C. Breagh was one of these toilers. On the previous

day he had helped the peasants clear the Red Ravine under the direction of the Gorze Sisters of Mercy, and darkness falling before the gruesome task was ended, he had kept on by torch and lantern-light until brain and muscles gave in. Then, staggering with weariness, he had gone back with the Sisters to their convent—had been dried and warmed, fed with soup and bread, stewed fruit and coffee, and had slept dreamlessly in the clean spare bed at their gardener's cottage—to wake, refreshed, in the light of a new day.

Morning had found every house in Gorze crammed with French and German wounded, and every able-bodied resident, willingly or otherwise, impressed into the service of the Red Cross. One single lady of the Sister's acquaintance, whose villa had been forcibly turned into a hospital, had retired to sleep off a nervous headache, setting her maid to guard her bedroom door. Which door, after an interval of trampling and violent argument, had been kicked open, revealing the kicker in the person of a Prussian General, muddy to the whiskers, hoarse from exposure and shouting, and blear-eyed from the lack of sleep, who there and then forcibly ejected the hapless spinster from her bed, and telling her go and nurse the wounded, pulled off his spurred boots, and promptly installed himself in her place.

This was mild treatment, even tender, to the usage received by many other harmless non-combatants. P. C. Breagh had seen an elderly priest savagely hit in the face by a dismounted Uhlan, whom he had unintentionally jostled in helping to lift a disabled French soldier into a cart.

And he had been witness of other outrages. He had seen a wayside cabaret gutted, and the casks hauled up from the cellar, set up on end, unheaded, and emptied by a party of blue infantry-men. When they had dipped in and filled their water-bottles, they had drunk out of their helmets,

and when they could drink no more, they had emptied out the wine upon the ground before the bush-decorated doorway, and with brutal jests and laughter watched the red stuff trickle away.

To this senseless waste the host had offered no objection. A blow from a gun-butt had previously knocked him senseless, and his wife, with her black hair hanging wildly over her shoulders, and her face blurred with tears and pale with terror, was trying to bring him round again.

XLIX.

The sight of the battle-field blotted out both these brutal pictures,—made him clench his hands until the nails dug deep into the palms, shut his eyes and set his teeth, fighting down the deadly qualm. . . . It was worse than the Red Ravine a hundred times magnified. It was awful—inconceivably awful. . . . He found himself muttering:

"I wonder how God can bear to look down on it all!"

With difficulty he controlled his ardent desire to remove himself as far as possible from this attained vision of his great desire, by using the legs that had brought him to this hideous scene:

"If some of the fellows who gas about wanting to see War—as I gassed—not twenty-four hours ago—could be set down where I stand now, they'd find out, as I have found—that they didn't know what they were talking about . . . . Oh, God! . . . suppose one of them saw that German Hussar without a head, sitting upright on a dead horse, curiously caparisoned with its own intestines, would he go sheer crazy or tumble down in a swoon?"

He who saw the thing kept on his legs and did not lose his mental equilibrium. We are so weak to our own knowledge that it is always a marvel when we find our-

selves strong. He found the nausea going and the dimness clearing from his vision. He could even breathe the dreadful air, and, standing on the limber of a broken gun-carriage, stare out over the rigid billows of that silent sea of death and tell himself that a not inapt comparison would have been Deal Beach, with ridges of dead men and beasts instead of ridges of pebbles, and flocks of carrion crows instead of gulls—flapping heavily from one place to settle down in another and renew their dreadful banquet, between hoarse croakings that sounded like "More, more, more!"

Starlings in myriads were there, revelling in blood and fat like the titmice and robins, who manifested predilections calculated to divest P. C. Breagh of the last remnant of belief in the tender fable of the Babes in the Wood. Butterflies, Royal Peacock and Purple Emperor, greedily sipped blood in preference to honey-dew. Hares, rendered tame by bewilderment and terror, couched among the corpses of men, their natural enemies.

Towards the north-east rose a knoll, about which the battle seemed to have raged desperately. For it was high-heaped with the bodies of green-jacketed Chasseurs on tall, bony brown horses, and ringed about with Red Uhlans and Dragoons in blue coats. The black-and-white lance-pennons were whipping and flickering in the morning breeze that brought with it the appalling savour of death. . . .

One had come to work, not to make notes. P. C. Breagh got down from the limber into the trough between two towering wave-crests and looked about him helplessly, not knowing where to begin. A bearer-party of the Prussian Ambulance Service pushed by him. They were hard-bitten, brown-faced men, who joked and laughed freely. A scared band of peasants followed, carrying auxiliary stretchers made of hurdles and sacks and poles.

Upon the heels of these tottered a single figure. Was it a young girl, or an old woman, so slight and frail, so bowed and blackly clad? A black silk veil covered the lowered face, small white hands were knitted across the narrow bosom. A white linen armlet with the badge of the Red Cross showed vividly against the sleeve of her plain black merino dress. The little, daintily shod feet that showed under the dabbled hem of the skirt had red mire upon them. Through the veil her great eyes gleamed, haggardly moving from side to side, restlessly seeking. . . .

P. C. Breagh was becoming familiar with that look of strained apprehension and bleak anxiety, stamped upon the sharpened faces of those crowds of black-clad men and women who hastened from all quarters to seek amidst the brute and human waste and wreckage of battle, their own wounded or dead.

This woman moved with the irregular gait of one walking in fog or darkness, looking from side to side, questing amidst blue and livid or waxen faces for *the* face, it was quite plain. Her look passed over bodies that did not wear the dark-green, silver-laced dolman, and silver-striped red pantaloons of the mounted Chasseurs of the Guard Imperial. She ignored faces that were young, and unadorned with the crisp moustache and the Imperial tuft.

For whom did she seek? A husband, uncle, father? . . . What lay in her path? Something that, did the little foot strike it unwarily, might bring to an end that tragic, anguished search. . . . The impact seemed so imminent that P. C. Breagh's voice died in his throat when he strove to call to her. He got out in a gasping croak:

"Stop! . . . Look! . . . Right in your path there! . . . For God's sake don't touch it!—it's a live shell!" . . .

She swerved blindly aside in obedience to the warning, though he who uttered it had spoken in his own tongue,

The edge of her skirt brushed the unexploded shrapnel, a potentiality fraught with hideous death. But she struck her knee against the wheel of the broken limber,—would have fallen but for P. C. Breagh. Even as the slight figure stumbled against him, he knew the veil screened the face of Juliette.

"Mademoiselle de Bayard! . . . Madame? . . ."

"Ah, it is you—it is you!" she said gaspingly.

And she would have dropped at his feet had he not thrust out strong hands and caught hers that were still knitted over her breast.

They were so cold, so cold and tiny. They stirred in his grasp like little half-frozen birds. She freed one, and put aside the heavy veil, and showed him what havoc Grief can make in loveliness. . . . She said—in the toneless wraith of the crystal voice he remembered:

"When you spoke to me in English, I knew Our Lord had not forgotten me. Ah, Monsieur Breagh, for the love you bear your sister!—for the love of charity—do not desert me! Me, I am in the greatest extremity, or I would not now venture to appeal to you. In the midst of these appalling cruelties and terrors I seek the body of one who is all the world to me. . . . For that I may find him living I do not dare to hope! . . ."

P. C. Breagh choked out, crimsoning and stammering:

"Not your husband? . . . You don't mean your husband? . . ."

She said with a wonderful, pure dignity:

"Not my husband. . . . My father, sir! . . . It is since a week that I returned from Belgium upon receiving news of his captivity in the hands of the Prussians. The intelligence was false—I afterwards learned. How—I cannot now tell you. At this moment, and in the presence of all these poor corpses, of odour so terrible, of appearance so frightful, I can remember nothing very well. But this—that I have

come from Rethel since yesterday, and that I have come altogether alone."

"Alone! . . . without a guide, or protector of any kind? Without papers? . . ." His face expressed the blankest surprise.

"A passport was obtained for me," she told him, "by a person in Brussels, so that I might accompany a lady—a near relative, who proposed returning to France. More I cannot tell you, but that I found myself without her company. When I quitted Rethel, I was given a military permit, by the aid of which I returned to Verdun. From Verdun, in a train full of French wounded—in a *fiacre* part of the way—in a peasant's cart the remaining distance—I travelled; hoping to reach the Camp of the Imperial Guard Cavalry at Châtel St. Germain. But at Plappeville they detained me. . . . A great battle was raging. . . . What thunder of guns, what fire and smoke, what terrible confusion, devastation, wounds and death, did I not behold. . . ."

She unknitted one of the little rigid hands that he had let go, felt for her handkerchief, and wiped away the cold drops of anguish that stood upon her blue-veined temples and about her colourless lips. And P. C. Breagh could only look at her in an agony of pity, and wonder at the courage that bore the frail creature up.

"Last night the frightful explosions of cannon ceased. A poor peasant woman had afforded me shelter in her cottage, and shared with me the milk of her goat and her last loaf of bread. News came before day, brought by a wounded soldier, whose comrades had been killed, that the battle had been won by the Army of France, but that M. de Bazaine had withdrawn our exhausted forces for rest and shelter to the Citadel of Metz. I asked this poor soldier for intelligence of my father's regiment, the 777th Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard. The reply was:

'*Three regiments of Mounted Chasseurs lie dead upon the field of honour. You will find them south of Flavigny, between the Bois de Vionville and the Bois de Gaumont!*' I cried out then, for the words had pierced me like sharp iron. I would have run out of the house to find my father, like a creature distracted, but that an ambulance of the Red Cross accompanied by two English Protestant Sisters passed through the village on the way to this terrible place. . . . They brought me with them—'*You cannot seek amongst the dead,*' they told me, '*without the brassard.*' This they put upon me, and then they bring me with them. Now I know not where they are, but I have found Monica's brother. Help me, Monsieur, for your sister's sake,—and I will pray for you until I die!"

She gave him one wild, supplicating look, put her little frozen hands together—would have knelt down on the bloody grass to plead with him the better, if he had seemed to delay. But he caught fire at her flaming eagerness, and snatched at the wallet of Red Cross necessaries he had unslung when he had climbed upon the broken limber to gaze over that sea of Death that spread to the horizon, crying:

"Of course I'll help you look for your father! . . . But how to search for him—and where? . . . Tell me again . . . the regiment and the colour of the uniform?"

Shuddering, she pointed to the green, silver-braided dolman clothing one of the rigid figures near. . . . He noted the red and green plume of the sealskin talpack, cut through, perhaps, by a stroke of the heavy sabre yet gripped in the stiff right hand of a Prussian Dragoo . He muttered, even while mentally registering other details of the Chasseur's uniform—noting the crest embroidered on the green schabraque of the brown charger whose inert weight rested on its dead rider's thigh:

"777th Chasseurs . . . I've heard German officers telling

each other that they fought like devils yesterday. . . . Half a dozen regiments might have been cut up here ! And we have to find one man somewhere in a square mile of piled-up bodies. . . . If one only had a bloodhound and one of de Bayard's gloves ! . . ."

Love has a scent as keen as the great dun hound of the hanging dewlap. The issue of the search was to prove this. For an hour, as it seemed, they traversed narrow lanes that wound between walls of dead men. Then the ground rose to a knoll, topped with three scorched oak-trees that, though stripped of their leaves and lopped of their branches by the blizzard of metal and fire, were still burning. Momentarily, the air expanding in their sap-channels exploded with the detonation of musketry. Charred cinders dropped from them; they gave forth clouds of acrid-smelling whitish smoke.

About and upon this knoll of the three oak-trees the battle of the previous day had raged—the billows of the sea of Death had beaten fiercely. The lane became a crevasse, the floor of which sloped sharply—from the sides of which projected rigid limbs, human and equine. But the slender figure in black moved between them—stooped to pass under them, seldom faltering. When the young man who followed begged her to turn back, she shook her head without answering, and kept on. The silent negative meant:

"Not yet ! A little farther still ! . . . Be patient with me, I beg of you !"

For it seemed to Juliette's tense nerves and overstrained senses as though those white or blue, or darkly-discoloured faces, hideously distorted or wearing an unnatural expression of calm, were all staring with their glassy eyes in one direction, pointed out by myriads of stiffened arms.

She said, tottering with sheer weakness, and turning upon

her companion colourless, black-ringed eyes set in a face most strangely peaked and shrunken:

"Here where these trees are I will turn, because my strength is failing. . . . See, see! O Mother of God! . . . O Jesu! . . . HE IS THERE!"

The scream that tore through her slender throat turned P. C. Breagh's blood to snow-water. He could only gasp, clutching at the folds of her black school-dress with a vague idea of holding her back from some sight of intolerable horror:

"Wait! For God's sake! Let me! . . ."

She shook off his unconsciously violent grasp as though it had been a baby's. She was gone, wading through a languid runnel of fast-congealing blood, stepping over a broken lance-shaft and a horse's rigid hind-limb. When P. C. Breagh reached her, she was crouching on a patch of hoof-torn earth through which the limestone core of the knoll showed in places, hugging to her bosom a stiff blue hand.

It wore a familiar ring, that brave right hand, from whose grip the long cavalry sword had dropped when the Uhlan gave the death-thrust. But I think, even without the crested sard, his daughter would have known. . . .

Madness was near enough in that fell hour to brush the bowed veiled head of Juliette with her tattered mantle of imaginary ermines. She saw nothing and knew nothing but that her father was there. She kissed the stiff blue hand and sang to it and cuddled it. Ophelia was not more tragic than this Convent school-girl, squatting in the chilly shadow of a heap of dead horsemen, lavishing futile, foolish tendernesses on that piece of insensible clay:

"My father, now that I have found thee, we must never be parted again—never! Indeed, I have tried to obey thee—but I could not help coming back because I love

thee so ! . . . Thou hast been wounded, but I will nurse thee and cure thee. When thou art well again we will find a quiet home together, where my mother shall never come. For she is not good as my grandmother was, and as thou art, my own father ! . . . I have fear of her, now that I have seen and known ! . . ."

She broke off and listened as though an answer had come from under the blood-stained Imperial eagle and the corpses that hid de Bayard from her view. One of them was the body of the young subaltern who had borne the standard. Over him sprawled the colossal form of a German officer of Dragoons. He was not dead, for he moved, and blood was yet trickling from a sword-cut that had bitten deep into his shoulder through the cuirass, and a deep gash in the close-cropped scalp of his unhelmeted head.

" Help ! Some drink ! *Donner !* how my head hurts !" he groaned faintly.

P. C. Breagh got to him by skirting the mound and scaling it from the opposite side. Reaching the summit, he dosed the Dragoon with cognac, and was about to apply a first-aid bandage to the damaged shoulder, when the red-banded forage-caps and bearded faces of a burial-party of Prussian Guard infantry strung through the narrow alley below the level of his operations, and an unforgotten voice said in rough Teutonic gutturals:

" Hereabouts or near. Begin this—widening the way until carts can get through to be loaded. . . . *Kreuzdonner-wetter !* is that a black dog up there ?"

Another voice answered:

" No, *Herr* Sergeant. It is either a nun or a woman !"

The Sergeant thundered:

" You silly sheepshead ! aren't nuns women ? But you *verdammte* Catholics think such wenches are angels out of the sky. Turn her out of that—woman or nun !"

L.

With a savage rush of scalding blood to his sun-bronzed cheeks and temples, P. C. Breagh realised that they meant Juliette. He thrust his head forward, peering down from his eyrie. The crouching little shape in black really looked no bigger than a big dog. Near her stood a soldier in the white-faced dark-blue uniform of the Guard Infantry. It was the spectacled ex-chemist Kunz, who had nodded him civil farewell. Staring up from below was the copper-coloured countenance of the too-zealous Sergeant Schmidt, not rendered more amiable by mud-splashes and powder grime in combination with a stitched-up scar across the bridge of the nose, and a flamboyant overgrowth of beard. He bellowed to the ex-chemist:

"Speak to her! Ask what is her business?"

The obedient Kunz stooped over the little bowed head, and seemed to put a question. She lifted her drained white face, shuddered, then resumed her previous attitude. Interrogated from below, Private Kunz responded:

"She is deaf, or mad. She only shakes and stares at one!"

The Sergeant bellowed:

"Shout in her ear, fool! You are not courting your sweetheart! Tell her to get up and move out of this!"

Thus urged, the ex-chemist approached his lips to the little ear shaded by the black silken tresses, and bawled the order of his superior. She gave no sign of having heard. Copper-red with indignation, the Sergeant commanded:

"Turn her out then! Promptly up with the baggage!"

Kunz, thus adjured, gripped the slight arm, not brutally. At the touch, Juliette gave a faint cry, and crouched lower, hiding her face upon the rigid hand she held. And

P. C. Breagh saw red, abandoned his groaning cavalryman and leaped for it, slithering down from the summit of his hillock with a roll of four-inch bandaging trailing in his wake. Casting caution to the winds, he shouted savagely:

"Let the lady go! Take your hand off! Damn you! —do you hear me?"

The words, being English, were not comprehended by the Sergeant. For an instant he stared open-mouthed at the unexpected apparition. The next he had bawled out an order to his men, and P. C. Breagh found himself looking down the long brown barrels of a couple of Prussian "needlers," accurately covering the exact area of waistcoat behind which his heart hammered and bumped. There was a creaking of leather then—and with the jingle of steel on steel, the snort of a horse reluctant to be ridden into an alley without turning-space. Over the heads of the Sergeant and his party rose the pricked ears, sagacious eyes, and broad-starred frontlet of a great, gaunt brown mare, ridden by a gigantic field officer, wearing the flat white, yellow-banded forage cap, black pewter buttoned frock, white cords, and immense spurred jack-boots of the Coburg regiment of White Cuirassiers.

"Whom have we English here? Who called out 'Take your hands off!'"

From under the peak of the white forage-cap the rider's heavy domineering stare took in the huddled feminine figure, the dishevelled young man menaced by the Service rifles, and the truculent attitude of Sergeant Schmidt. He lifted a finger, and the "needlers" became vertical. He beckoned with the authoritative digit, and P. C. Breagh drew near. And the sickening horrors of the battle-field faded suddenly from about the Englishman. . . . He was back in the tobacco-scented study of a house in the Wilhelmstrasse, Berlin. And the resonant tones of the

man who stood for Prussia in the mind's eye of the world were saying, in Bismarck's well-phrased English:

"Even though you belong to a neutral nation, you should not presume upon the fact too rashly. Had I not been within earshot just now, you would have paid with your life for your interference. German military authority is supreme, and in the execution of its duty not to be turned aside!"

P. C. Breagh retorted, tingling to the very finger-tips:

"Your Excellency, I interfered to save this lady from ill-usage."

"She is a Frenchwoman? . . . Explain to her," said the resonant voice coldly and brutally: "that even to reach the side of a fallen lover, too much may be risked and lost!"

P. C. Breagh said, meeting the imperious stare with yellow-gray eyes that blazed tigerishly:

"Excellency, the dead man is her father, Colonel de Bayard, 777th Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard."

"Stand back," said the domineering voice, "and I will speak to her!"

At a touch of the spur the great brown mare moved forwards, breasting the lance-shaft that barred the narrow alley, terribly squeezing the Sergeant and his men.

"Mademoiselle de Bayard!" said the authoritative voice.

"Excellency, she does not hear you! the shock has been too terrible," Carolan was beginning. He was brusquely interrupted with:

"People usually listen when I speak to them. Be good enough, Mademoiselle de Bayard, to stand up and listen to me!"

He had spoken in French. The big brown mare snorted angrily and fidgeted. He turned her head with an iron

hand on the curb-bit, looking steadily at the other female thing.

"Mademoiselle de Bayard, do you hear ?"

This time she lifted her sunken head, and turned her small pinched face his way. In the haggard young mask of frozen anguish two wild eyes glittered, tearless and stony-hard. Then slowly, as though his powerful will impelled her, she rose to her knees, and stood upon her feet. He said, in cool, incisive accents:

"Young lady, your father was a gallant soldier. I myself had the privilege of seeing how he died. I wish such a man had served a better master ! . . ."

She answered, her white lips barely moving as they framed the sentence:

"He served the Master of Kings and Emperors, before Whom he stands now !"

His sombre eyes lightened suddenly as though in irritation. He said in tones that had the clang of overbearing authority:

"I cannot enter now into a theological discussion. The battlefield is no place for debate, or for unprotected women and young girls. . . . In your own best interests I counsel you to return home." He added—and there was no flicker of recognition in the passing glance vouchsafed to P. C. Breagh: "Alone, if you prefer—or under the escort of this young Englishman. . . . I will promise you that your father's body shall be treated with respect !" His heavy eyes fell on the stiffened face of the Sergeant, standing rigidly in the attitude of salute. "Where is the officer in charge of this burial-party ?" he added, grimly enough.

"Here, Excellency !" came from behind him. He glanced over his shoulder and said to the flurried under-lieutenant who had hurried up and was standing in the alley-way:

"A separate grave, distinguished by some mark that is

recognisable by the daughter." He looked back at the daughter, saying curtly: " Your veil !"

She removed it in silence, and handed it to the ex-chemist, who received the frail fluttering cobweb between his finger and thumb. Then the brown mare, in obedience to the iron hand upon the bridle, backed out of the alley of silent witnesses, baring her long, vicious-looking yellow teeth and showing the whites of her savage eyes resentfully. From the florid bull-dog face of her rider, barred with the heavy moustache of iron gray, all memory of the little drama just enacted had been effaced, as the outlines of a sketch in charcoal are wiped from wood or stone.

But as the alley widened and his great beast surged round, switching her tail, putting back her ears and lashing out with her heels so as to nearly brain the officer, P. C. Breagh thought he caught the words:

" Remember, the grave separate . . . marked to find easily. All decency. . . answer to me !"

More he might have heard, but for Juliette's sobbing. For God had remembered her, and sent her tears at last.

She had suddenly seen, lying at her feet, a frayed and crumpled envelope bearing the Belgian postmark, and addressed in her own handwriting to M. le Colonel H. A. A. de Bayard, Headquarters of the 777th Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard Imperial with the Army of France, at Metz. And the intuition of love told her that the dead man must have carried this, the last message received from his daughter, hidden in his bosom; and have drawn it forth and kissed it—as in very truth we know he had—shortly before he died.

" See, see, my friend ! Behold my own letter. His sacred blood has stained it. . . . His lips perhaps have pressed it !—it well may be that tears of his have fallen here also ! . . . Never shall it leave me until my hand is

cold as this is ! Adieu, dear hand !" She knelt down to fondle it, had to be raised almost by force—would have returned for a last caress—a final prayer, but that P. C. Breagh, rendered desperate by the evident impatience of the officer and the scowling looks of the Sergeant and his merry men, lifted her bodily in his arms and carried her away.

" I pray you put me down ! . . . Me, I am not an infant !" she protested. " See you well, Monsieur Breagh, I do not think it *convenable* that a gentleman should carry a lady so ! . . ."

Then her strength ebbed from her, and she became in truth an infant. As her frail body yielded to his clasp, as her head sank down upon his shoulder, she sighed, a long, quivering sigh.

What of the youth who waded through the frozen sea of Death, bearing in his arms his worshipped lady. He was footsore and aching in every bone and muscle from long marches and desperate exertion. His heart pounded so beneath her cheek that it seemed to him she must hear it and be frightened, or that he must suffocate and die outright. Terror and rapture, exquisite pain and exquisite pleasure, mingled in the draught now held to his lips by Life's cup-bearer, Fate. And as he drank, with what strange birth-pangs, his budding manhood burgeoned into flower. He might look back upon his boyhood with regret, contempt, or tenderness. . . . He would never be a boy again.

LI.

The smallest and slenderest of women can be surprisingly heavy, even when carried in the arms of a lover who long has borne her in his heart.

Thus to P. C. Breagh, stumbling with his precious burden over roads strewn with weapons, accoutrements, mess-tins,

and water-bottles, boxes of biscuit and halves of sugar-loaves discarded by troops retiring in haste, the appearance of a peasant leading a little white-faced donkey came as an unspeakably welcome relief. For a franc in good French money the owner of the donkey was more than willing to hire out his property. Thus, seated on this humble animal, P. C. Breagh's Infanta returned to the cottage where she had passed the previous night.

It was one of a hamlet boasting the name of Petit Plappeville. To reach it they skirted the frightful carnage at St. Hubert, threaded the wood of Châtel St. Germain, crossed the railroad, unmolested by the Prussian patrols, and, following narrow lanes hidden between copses, came at last upon its single street.

Madame Guyot, stout, hospitable, and voluble, received Juliette with cries of welcome and open arms. Mademoiselle should have something better than dry bread on this occasion, for a neighbour had that morning killed a calf. Hence veal cutlet, fried in batter,—for some of the hens, scared by yesterday's bombardment, had already begun laying—and an omelette with fine herbs. No less than young demoiselles, wounded soldiers require nourishment, and here behold, English Monsieur accompanying Mademoiselle—lying upon the pallet-bed in the corner of the kitchen, one of France's brave defenders in the person of my Cousin Boisset. Pardon that he cannot rise to salute you, for the Prussians have made it impossible. During the battle of St. Privat yesterday, my Cousin Boisset was twice wounded while serving with the Eighteenth Field Battery of the Sixth Army Corps. . . .

Thus introduced, the gunner told his story, and told it with vivacity in spite of his evident pain. His bandaged head and the useless leg roughly swaddled in a homespun towel of Madame Guyot's, told their story no less than his nimble tongue and vivacious eyes and hands.

"We were overcome by force of numbers. . . . The Germans know nothing of scientific warfare. . . . Believe me, Mademoiselle and Monsieur, we swept them down in rows like ninepins painted black. At twelve hundred yards, and again at fourteen hundred—and the more we killed the more there were to kill! . . . *Saperlipopette!*—pardon, Mademoiselle!—it was inconceivable! We were compelled at length to cease fire because our ammunition failed us, and it was not possible to butcher any more! —Worst of all,—our generals lost their heads, and issued contradictory orders!—Commissariat broke down before the ammunition-service—we had had nothing to eat for two days before we ceased to have shrapnel with which to feed our guns. . . . So we stood in front of a wood in which we might have taken cover, being peppered by Prussian fire of infantry and artillery, for three whole hours!—Three solid hours, Monsieur and Mademoiselle—until we were remembered, and ordered to retire. When the order came, few officers remained, and not a single non-commissioned officer was left to us. Of the three batteries of our Brigade Division two-thirds lay dead upon the field. With my wounded leg trailing behind me, I crawled over rank after rank of bodies, passing over many of my old comrades. . . . Then I lay in the wood till dusk, and made crutches of saplings I cut down with my bayonet. With the day I reached my cousin's house. . . . You may say 'All this is War'—but what kind of War?—is what I ask you . . . I—a soldier who have fought and bled for France!"

It was the voice of Juliette that answered from the corner of the blackened oaken settle, where she sat huddled in the leaden stupor that is born of grief and fatigue:

"Soldier of France, I will try to answer your question. . . . I am young and ignorant, but I have read and thought much. And now I have experienced what never can be forgotten. . . . I have sat by the corpse of my father on

the battlefield. . . . I have looked in the face of the great man who is my country's cruel enemy ! . . ."

Madame Guyot, who was frying a panful of veal cutlet, started and looked round from her sputtering, savoury-smelling cookery. The wounded gunner, propped up on the pallet bed that stood in the corner of the low-ceiled, stone-built kitchen, turned keen dark eyes and a resolute bearded face towards the quarter whence came the sad, faint voice:

" It is Bismarck's War," she said. " Stone by stone he has built up Prussia until her vast shadow has swallowed up all Germany. He has seen—this huge man of colossal ambitions, that the road to Power greater still, leads through the gate of France. And Diplomacy could not steal the key, and Treachery could not buy it, so the lever with which he opens the gate, is War !"

" Alas, Mademoiselle," returned the gunner sorrowfully, " the gate would never have opened while a French soldier was left alive—if we had not been betrayed ! Have you seen the picture of Cham in last week's *Charivari ?* It reached my battery through one of our officers. It is true—*mon Dieu !*—it is desperately true. There is the Little Napoleon of To-day dressed up in the old cocked hat and the tattered rags of the capote that used to be worn by the Great Napoleon. He begs at the street-corner for sous—and even the prostitute turns away from the impostor. ' The End of the Legend !' is written underneath. It is furiously *chic* and terribly clever—and frightfully true, Mademoiselle. For the Napoleonic legend is done with,—finished, for good and all !"

She did not answer, the momentary flash of interest had died out. With her sad eyes fixed upon the ebony and silver crucifix of her rosary, she was murmuring a prayer—doubtless for her father's soul. Seeing her thus absorbed, the soldier glanced at her companion, shrugged signifi-

cantly and tapped his own forehead, as though he would have said:

"It is well that women have faith in Heaven. See!—she turns to her beads, the poor little one. She is able to pray!—that is fortunate. . . . Otherwise grief would turn her brain!"

Meeting no response from P. C. Breagh, who sat upon a backless straw-bottomed chair in the chimney corner, raptly contemplating the small, sorrowful face, the gunner shrugged again, and exchanged a wink of intelligence with Madame Guyot, as she took the bubbling pan from the fire, proclaiming the cutlet cooked to a turn.

Who has loved and does not remember the first meal partaken in the company of the beloved. To one guest at Madame Guyot's board, the fried cutlet and tomatoes eaten from her coarse platters of red-flowered crockery, the home-baked loaf, the jug of thin red wine, the country cheese and the dish of purple plums that served as dessert, made a banquet worthy of the gods. To sit opposite that little drawn, white face with the lowered, swollen eyelids, and watch her brave pretence of relishing their hostess's victuals, would have been torture had it not been bliss.

When the homespun cloth had been drawn, the crumbs shaken out upon the threshold for the hungry poultry, the cat accommodated with a saucer of scraps, and the hearth swept, P. C. Breagh, glancing at the cuckoo-clock that had hiccuped twelve, and now pointed to the half-hour, got up and reluctantly tore himself away.

"You are going? . . . Back to *him?* . . . To make sure that those soldiers have obeyed the orders of M. de Bismarck? Ah! that is what I have been praying for! Our Lady has put it into your head."

She said it eagerly, with her hand quieting the flutter in her bosom. Of what else should de Bayard's daughter

have been thinking? P. C. Breagh asked himself. He entreated, his troubled gray eyes wistfully questioning:

"You won't leave this place until I come back? Pray do not! . . . Promise me!"

The soldier, chatting in low tones with the good woman of the cottage, pricked his hairy ears at the unfamiliar accent of the English words. Juliette answered in the same tongue:

"Monsieur, I give you my *parole* of honour. When you come back to this house, if I am alive, you will find me here, under the *manteau* of Our Lady. May She protect and guard you. *Au revoir!* . . ."

P. C. Breagh echoed the final words, and held out his big hand. She considered it a moment, hesitated, then laid her own in the broad, blistered palm. As he shut his strong fingers over the fragile captive, it struggled, then lay still throbbing like some small imprisoned bird. And a dimness came before his eyes, and he hurriedly released her, stammering:

"Take—take care of yourself, won't you? I'll—not be very long away!"

She called him back. He knew a shock of joy and hurried towards her. She slipped her Rosary into his hand with a gold coin, faltering with eyes brimful, and quivering lips:

"This . . . to be buried with him! . . . This—for a priest to read the Office and offer Mass . . . if one can be discovered! . . . Oh! if I might come with you! . . . but no!—I will not be unreasonable. Again, it must not be that you carry me, as you did to-day!"

He trembled at the poignant recollection. She went on breathing fast and eagerly, lifting her eyes, poor rain-washed scillas, to his,—laying her small hand timidly on his shabby sleeve.

"Me, I have an idea! . . . There is now in Heaven a

great saint who was priest of a little village that lies not far from here. . . . Since he died, it is eleven years. . . . I speak of M. Jean-Baptiste Vianney, the Blessed Curé of Ars. . . ."

P. C. Breagh nodded recognition of the shining name she mentioned. She went on, her small fingers pinching a fold of the rough brown sleeve:

"Sacrifice—mortification—the Cross—these things to the holy Curé were the Keys of Heaven. The poorest and simplest of his peasants was not poorer or simpler than he. Even before his death Our Lord gave him the grace to perform miracles, and always did Our Lady regard him with tenderness. . . . See you well, I will pray to the Blessed Jean Vianney to intercede for me, that God may send a holy priest to read the office for the dead!"

Her voice broke, and the bright tears brimmed over her pure underlids. At the sight a wave of tenderness surged up in him, pure of all sensuous passion, knowing only the overwhelming desire to serve, and comfort, and protect. . . . He bent his head, and kissed the little hand, before he turned and went from her. When he glanced back, midway down the wide dusty street of the hamlet of scattered cottages, Juliette was standing in the sunshine, looking earnestly after him.

LII.

She could think clearly and remember again. The confusion in her overwrought brain gradually subsided. She went back to the fatal days when the news of the defeats of Wörth and Spicheren rushed shrieking through France and Belgium, and the 16th of August brought word of Bazaine's intercepted retreat from Metz. That day a young girl, sitting under the grisly wing of Madame Tessier

at the *table d'hôte* of the Hôtel de Flandre, in Brussels, had risen up as pale as death and hurried from the room.

The picture was clear-cut, definite as a photograph. She saw the tables in confusion. . . . French guests uprising, the men exclaiming, and the ladies in tears,—Belgians sympathising—Teutons exchanging congratulatory eye-glances, and smiles not at all concealed. As the white girl passed the chair from which a German cavalry officer had risen, he whipped the obstacle out of her way with an ogle and a bow. And Juliette, covering her eyes as though the sight of him scorched them, had fled past him. . . . As she quitted the *salle à manger*, the voice of Madame Tessier had reached her, saying grimly to the dandy:

"A civility from one of your nation at such a moment is an insult, Monsieur."

And Madame, with bristling moustaches, had also risen, and gone in search of her daughter-in-law elect, to be arrested at the foot of the grand staircase by a waiter with the intelligence that Mademoiselle had gone to her room to lie down, and begged not to be disturbed. . . . To which apartment, it being on the third floor, Madame Tessier—having wound up the twelve-o'clock *déjeuner* of hot meats and vegetables and salad with coffee and pastry,—did not follow her. Had she braved the ascent, this story would have ended in quite a different way.

Upon this day, that saw the battle of Mars la Tour, Juliette would not have met the elegant, self-possessed, ingratiating lady who had spoken to her so amiably on the previous afternoon. When—Madame Tessier being engaged in changing a French *billet de banque* into Belgian money—Juliette had inquired for letters at the bureau.

"'Mademoiselle de Bayard.' . . . Unhappily there is not a single letter for Mademoiselle de Bayard . . ." had said the curled and whiskered functionary, taking an envelope from compartment "B" of the green baize-covered

letter-rack, and handing it to this lady, who stood immediately behind.

Juliette had found it impossible not to see the address upon this letter:

"To Madame de Baye,
"Hôtel de Flandre,
"Brussels,"

written in rather a vulgar scrawl. It carried extra stamps, and looked bulky. And the elegantly-gloved hand that was extended to take it, recoiled from the contact as though the envelope had concealed a scorpion.

The owner of the hand had regarded Mademoiselle de Bayard with a piercing and exhaustive scrutiny, even as she slipped the letter into a gold-mounted reticule, and snapped the spring tight. She had observed in soft and well-bred accents:

"Letters from one we love are enhanced in value, when the writer must lay down the sword to use the pen. . . ."

Through a black lace veil so thickly flowered as to suggest a mask, a pair of brilliant eyes glittered at Juliette. What dazzling teeth were revealed by the crimson lips that smiled. . . . The well-bred voice added, with an entrancing touch of melancholy:

"Under other circumstances, to address Mademoiselle would be held a liberty—the speaker being a stranger. Yet as the wife of a French officer of the Imperial Guard,—I may be pardoned for presuming in my young countrywoman an anxiety similar to my own? . . ."

"Ah, Madame," Juliette had said impulsively, "who is there would not pardon you?"

And she had looked with a young girl's honest admiration at the sumptuous form in the perfectly-appointed dress. When the lady had said, with brilliant eyes still fixed on her:

"Were this letter not from my husband, I could wish it had been for you." She continued: "Does Mademoiselle know M. de Baye's regiment? The 777th Mounted Chasseurs . . . ?"

"My father commands it, Madame," Juliette had proudly answered. And an animated conversation would have sprung from this answer, but Madame Tessier turned round rather sharply, and the lady, with a slight, graceful inclination, had glided rather rapidly away.

Later, Juliette had encountered Madame de Baye upon the staircase, and had received another of her brilliant glances, and another of her entrancing smiles. And, being lonely in this strange land, and athirst for interest and companionship, the young girl had woven a little romance out of this passing acquaintanceship.

Now as she reached her room, trembling and ready to sink with excitement and agitation, a woman stopped her in the corridor, who looked like a lady's maid of the better class. Well mannered, smart and discreet, she dropped Mademoiselle de Bayard an ingratiating curtsey, handing her at the same time a little three-cornered note.

As the messenger plainly waited for an answer, Juliette unfolded the delicately perfumed cocked-hat. This is what she read in a finely-pointed feminine caligraphy, with lasso-loops to all the "g's," "y's," and "h's," and "s's "of the prolonged, old-fashioned kind.

The maid had penned it at the dictation of her mistress, who for an unexplained reason preferred another hand to bait her hook. This is what Juliette read between her heart-beats, striving to check her flowing tears, and the sobs that rose in her throat.

"To you, Mademoiselle, so spirituelle, gentille and amiable, I am fated, alas! to cause the greatest grief. I have received the most terrible news of my husband's regiment. The reports

of the Emperor's resignation are false, from the beginning. The Army of Metz, Mademoiselle, has encountered Prussian forces. . . . Where I know not, but with terrible loss! My Victor has been dangerously wounded and conveyed to hospital at Metz. I fly thither on the wings of anxiety and tenderness to receive too possibly! his final kiss. Also I learn that M. le Colonel de Bayard has been taken prisoner. . . . My pen trembles as I write the words.

"*Since I may not tender them personally, receive, Mademoiselle, my condolences and farewells. May Heaven protect you!*

"*Distractedly and devotedly,*

"A. DE BAYE."

Madame was packing, said the maid upon whom Juliette turned with a breathless inquiry. Without doubt Madame would receive Mademoiselle. . . . And, having previously been primed with instructions, Mariette, whom not so long ago we encountered in Berlin, conducted Mademoiselle to a door upon the lower landing, and having knocked discreetly, ushered the young lady in.

It was a bedroom crowded with trunks and imperials, none of which seemed to have been unpacked. The lovely lady of the veil was standing near the toilette-table in a thoughtful pose which did justice to her figure and the beauty of her profile. She had removed her veil and held it in her hand, as she changed the position of a jewelled comb in her hair. . . . She looked round as the door opened. Her brilliant eyes, ruddy-brown as Persian sard or Brazilian tourmaline, encountered the tearful eyes of Juliette. She advanced to meet the girl with effusive tenderness, crying:

"Alas, poor little one! From my heart I pity you! . . ."

She was not so beautiful, unveiled, as she had appeared behind her mask of black lace flowers. The handsome

eyes were bloodshot and too prominent. There were faint dusky-red streaks showing through the purchased roses and lilies of her complexion; horizontal marks, resembling the congenital disfigurement known as "port-wine stain." And withal she was an attractive woman of fascinating manners. And her sympathy seemed genuine, and yet—for some incomprehensible reason, Juliette trembled at and shrank from her touch. . . .

"You are too good to receive me—you who are also suffering! . . ." She tried to collect herself, and not cause distress. "How I pity you I cannot tell you! but at least you have the knowledge that you are returning to your husband's bedside. You will have the sad consolation of seeing him, while I . . ."

She broke down and sobbed, and the sympathetic Adelaide administered red lavender on sugar, while her maid kept guard on the landing to intercept Madame Tessier should she appear. The cock-and-bull story told the girl would hardly have borne the test of recital before a third person. But Juliette was young, and innocent and unsuspecting, and Adelaide was experienced in the ways of the world, and very old in guile. . . .

"Courage, my child, and above all, have faith in Heaven!" It did not at all suit her voluptuous type, the heroic-pious tone. . . . "Naturally you will, knowing M. le Colonel a prisoner, leave nothing undone to assuage the miseries of his situation! . . . Have I guessed right? I venture to think I have!" She patted Juliette's hand and smiled in the drowned blue eyes, from which she gently drew the little soaked handkerchief. "Accompanied by your venerable protectress, you will instantly return to France. You will leave no stone unturned to obtain an interview with the Emperor—you will implore him on your knees, to obtain M. le Colonel's exchange. . . . Presto! the Emperor will set the machinery in motion. He will

give back three officers to the King of Prussia—and Mademoiselle will have her father again! Is it not so, tell me, my little one?"

She held the girl's small hands in hers, and as she marked off each item of her programme, she gently clapped the hands together, as in approval or consent. It was a characteristic trick with Adelaide when she meant to be playfully coaxing, and there was imprudence in employing it now. But with the first inchoate stirring of memory in Juliette, caution reawakened in Madame de Bayard. She released the hands, and said in a graver tone:

"Your *gouvernante* will not object to return?"

Juliette responded:

"Dear Madame, that lady is not my instructress. She is the excellent Madame Tessier, my grandmother's oldest friend."

Adelaide's lip wore the expression of one who sniffs at physic. Had she not been deafened with the recounted virtues of this very Madame Tessier! As she racked her memory for the date of a possible meeting, Juliette continued:

"She is very kind to me. But I fear she will not consent to return to France immediately. She is now upon her way to Mons-sur-Trouille to attend the wedding of her only son. All has been arranged. It is to take place upon the 22nd."

A sigh heaved her breast, and her eyelids sank under the burning gaze of Adelaide. But Adelaide was still engaged with Madame Tessier.

"*If she has seen me once—and it may well be once!—she certainly has forgotten me!*" she commented mentally. Aloud she said:

"But you, Mademoiselle—you are free to return to our beloved country. Under my own guardianship if you will. Do not refuse! . . . Grant me the privilege!"

Juliette panted:

"Oh, if I might accept! . . . But this marriage is the obstacle! Because M. Tessier could not return to France for it, my father commanded that I should go. All the more urgently that War had been declared with Prussia, and the regiment had been ordered to join the Imperial Army at Metz."

Madame Adelaide repeated scoffingly:

"This marriage . . . this marriage. . . . Is your presence necessary to legalise the ceremony?"

Juliette cried, opening wide her eyes:

"Alas! yes, Madame!—for I am to be the bride! . . ."

A shock visibly passed through the nerves of the woman who heard her. She started in her chair and grew livid underneath her powder and rouge. And the dusky marks on her fair skin started into sinister prominence. She was suddenly terrible, and haggard and old. . . .

"So, that was de Bayard's plot. . . . To marry her!" Adelaid heard an inward voice saying. "Why did you not foresee that, knowing her of age? Nineteen—though she looks like a child, almost. . . . Her grandmother possessed that physique of an infant, in combination with an iron determination, and a regard of truth that robbed Life of every alleviation, deprived conversation of grace and versatility—reduced the very language of Love to the level of a notary's *précis*. . . ."

All this passed through her brain in an instant. She controlled herself, rose, took the girl's hands again, and kissed her on the brow, saying with sorrowful melodiousness:

"My child, I comprehend! But while I rejoice at the happiness that awaits the daughter, I weep—forgive me that I weep!—for the father in his prison-cell. He is handsome, thy betrothed—and brave—and not a soldier? In a day like this when our France cries out for men?"

Juliette clenched her little hands as the languid irony stabbed her. She cried out, almost beside herself:

"Oh, that is what I feel, and for that I cannot pardon him! Why is he not a soldier? One could esteem him if he were! But oh! Madame,—I despise him, and that makes it the more terrible. . . . This marriage with a husband whom I have never even seen!"

"*Ah, ha!* . . ." she heard a strange voice scream through peals of laughter. "Ah, *là, là!*—what a clumsy game to play! . . . *Fi donc, M. le Colonel!* . . . So we were to be married in the style of the Old Commander. . . . '*Pas files a droite!* . . . To the church, quick march!' *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* how droll! . . ."

She dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief, and said, controlling her frantic merriment:

"Sweet child, forgive me, I am a little hysterical. . . . The shock of Victor's wound . . . my sympathy with your cruel situation. . . . How could M. le Colonel subject you to a trial so severe?" Feeling herself upon unsafe ground, she dried her eyes again and amended. "That, I comprehend, is a question between yourselves. . . . When this wedding was arranged M. le Colonel had no comprehension of what would befall him. Yet, for his sake, would it not be wise to delay? Engage the interest of the Emperor before it is too late to reach the beloved captive. Should he be interned in some fortress of East Prussia, how will even a daughter's tenderness reach him amidst those desolate plains—in those caverns of freezing stone! . . ."

She used her fine voice like a consummate artist of the theatre. . . . Juliette had a vision of her father dying, fettered, ghastly and gaunt with famine, as an engraving of Count Ugolino in his dungeon she remembered to have somewhere seen. . . . And her secret horror of Charles Tessier, wedded with the feverish longing to return to

France and work for the release of her dear prisoner, prompted her to decision now. . . .

" I will go with you, since you are good enough to propose it. But Madame Tessier will never give her consent. Therefore, we must leave here without consulting her, and secretly. . . . I will write a letter explaining all. Money I have for the railway-charges, not much, but I think sufficient !"

Said Adelaide, barely able to hide her triumph:

" Leave the purchase of the tickets to me, *ma mignonne !* I have a pretty little score to settle with M. le Colonel. We will settle our accounts presently, I promise you ! What is the matter now ?"

Juliette gasped:

" Alas !—I have no passport ! At least, Madame Tessier has both ours. . . ."

" Ah, bah !" said Adelaide. " We will borrow Mariette's. . . . She can remain here at pasture, and amuse herself with the waiters ! . . ." She burst out laughing at Juliette's look of astonishment, and tapped her under the chin, telling her to go to her room, pack a small hand-bag with necessary articles, change into a dark, plain walking-dress, and rejoin her as soon as might be. She showed a watch, its back thickly crusted with emeralds, saying:

" Hurry ! . . . You have barely a quarter of an hour."

Then she opened the door, sped her capture with a beaming smile, beckoned Mariette, and this strange colloquy took place between Circe and her tirewoman:

" Did the old woman come nosing upstairs after the little Mademoiselle joined me ?"

Mariette replied:

" She did, Madame, but I had locked both Mademoiselle's doors—that leading into the old lady's room, and the one that opens on the corridor,—and put the keys in my pocket. Here they are !"

She held them up, her sallow features expressive with the expectation of a reward earned by intelligence. Said Adelaide, impatiently tapping her handsome foot:

"And then? . . . And then? . . ."

"Then I accidentally encountered Madame on the threshold of Mademoiselle's apartment. Seeing her about to knock, I told her that I had seen the young lady descend the stairs, carrying a letter, which I supposed Mademoiselle intended to post at the pillar in the vestibule. . . . Hearing this the old lady thanked me, and bundled downstairs. She is asthmatic, judging by her wheezing. . . . She will wait a bit before she climbs up all these flights again!"

Adelaide thought a moment, and then gave orders.

"Run you down, hunt up the old woman—help her to search everywhere for the little thing—you understand! . . . Half an hour will be sufficient to detain her below stairs. In less time Mademoiselle will be safe with me in my apartment. . . . Then you will give Madame these keys and a little note written by Mademoiselle. . . . Or—do you know of a waiter who would undertake to do this and hold his tongue?"

Mariette's expression became sentimental. She said, with her head tilted on one side:

"There is one, a Swiss youth, handsome and with the form of an athlete, upon whose fidelity and silence Madame can implicitly rely. . . ."

"For how much?" Adelaide demanded, having no illusions as to the permanence of an unpurchased silence.

Mariette answered:

"I will guarantee Adolphe Madame's for the sum of twenty francs!"

Adelaide gave her a bank-note, and the faithful creature tripped away to split it. Despite youth, beauty and muscles, her Adolphe only got ten francs. But he carried out his instructions and handed Madame Tessier the keys,

with a little envelope, containing a hasty line in the handwriting of Juliette:

"*Dearest Madame,*" it said. "*This moment I have received grave news of my father, compelling me to leave your side. This marriage must be deferred. Entreat M. Charles to excuse me! I embrace and pray you to pardon.*

"J. M. DE B."

The little note was penned on the corner of Adelaide's toilette-table. While Madame read it and fainted,—was revived by Mariette and the athletic Adolphe,—scolded herself into hysterics, came out of them and despatched telegrams; tore the telegrams up and wrote letters,—Juliette was safely hidden in Madame Adelaide's room.

Later on, when Madame Tessier had left the hotel, with her luggage and the trunks and bandboxes of the vanished bride-elect—this time containing the marriage robe, crown and so on,—Madame de Baye sent for her bill and paid it—ordered a *fiacre* and drove to the station, accompanied by her maid, and her maid's sister, a demure little person in black merino, cut convent-style, whose head was draped, after the fashion of some lay novices, with a black silk veil.

The abduction was effected in the simplest fashion. . . . Not a soul turned to look at the dowdy little figure carrying the hand-bag, its slight proportions half hidden in the sweeping folds of Adelaide's silken train.

The station was crowded with newly-arrived French officers, men of MacMahon's defeated army, who wore their swords, having given their *parole* to their captors not to serve again in the War. Belgian officers fraternised with them,—Belgian ladies of the Red Cross were busily engaged in making much of those who were wounded. . . . Juliette's heart swelled at the sight of the bandages and crutches, and

when the laden stretchers were carried past, the hot tears streamed down her white cheeks behind her screening veil.

The train carried a great many French passengers, as well as an English Red Cross column and a Belgian one. When the engine shrieked, Juliette started as guiltily as though it had been the voice of Madame Tessier, shrilly lamenting an absconding daughter-in-law.

They were off—launched upon the iron road that led back to France and freedom. The excellent Mariette remained behind. She would sleep at some hotel, procure a passport, and join her mistress later. Madame de Baye took the trouble to explain.

From the shrinking little figure in the corner of the carriage came a muffled sound in answer:

"Let her mope," Adelaide said to herself. "Thought is necessary to carry out my plan!"

You are to see her as Juliette saw her, leaning her fair round elbow on the padded window-ledge, and thinking, as the rolling plains in the vicinity of Brussels gradually gave place to valley and hill. All of fierce and sensual and treacherous, that mingled in her complex nature with how many nobler qualities,—showed now in the beautiful mask of Adelaide, even as she sat brooding there.

She had knotty problems to decide, it must be admitted. . . . How best to play this marvellous trump, her daughter, thrown in her way by chance, was one of these. That plot of Straz, for bringing the girl into contact with the Heir Imperial, might be combined with Adelaide's own original notion of employing the girl's influence to bring about a reconciliation with M. de Bayard.

The indifference of M. de Bismarck had quashed her tentative approaches on the one subject. The silent contempt of de Bayard had thrown the other affair out of gear. To score off both would be magnificent. . . . As

for Straz . . . she lost grip of herself when she thought of the Roumanian, murmuring:

"For revenge on him, who has robbed me of my beauty, how cheerfully I would give my soul!"

Juliette, from her corner, saw the change and shuddered. Adelaide turned sharply, to read terror in the girl's face.

"What is it, my chicken? Has anything frightened you? . . ."

The terrifying Medusa turned to a maternally-smiling Cybele. She leaned across the intervening space of cushion, to playfully pat the knee of her charge. But the answering smile was as faint as the scent of frozen violets. . . . The spell of her beauty had been broken when her demon had looked out of her eyes.

"My nerves are not as strong as they were before—what happened in July," she told herself. "And that is another debt I owe to Nicolas. He would be wiser to let me forget him—if oblivion be possible?"

Her looking-glass bore out each day what the Roumanian had said to her. "*Never will you be able to look in your mirror without remembering me!*"

And to keep her smart alive, the Slav had adopted a method of his own invention. Peculiarly ingenious and characteristic of Straz.

At intervals Adelaide received anonymous letters, containing enclosures, wherever she went and by whatever alias she passed. Envelopes directed in varying hands would contain doll's mirrors costing but a sou or two. Pinchbeck-framed ovals or circles of tin or glass, always reflecting the same thing.

A livid face of hate, streaked with those faint brownish-red marks left by the tightened folds of the silk scarf that had so nearly strangled her. She had tried to laugh at this childish form assumed by the malice of the Roumanian. But the deadly cleverness of the thing lay in the fact—that

it did what it was meant to do. The mediæval torture of the falling drops of water was equalled by this Ordeal of the Penny Looking-Glass.

"*Look, see, and think of me!*" sometimes ran the doggerel rhyme scrawled on the paper wrapping of the doll's mirror. At other times:

"*Charms that are spoiled hold no men entoiled!*" would be the motto, or something equally stupid, dull and banal. The stupidity was becoming unbearable by its very repetition; by the certainty and regularity with which the laden envelopes arrived. Sometimes Adelaide felt entangled in a cunningly woven network . . . surrounded by spies, sleepless and unseen. . . . Yet in the maid Mariette the Slav had found an accomplice clever enough to carry out his purposes single-handed. The cream of the thing was—Adelaide never suspected Mariette.

Treacherous herself, she believed in the devotion of this woman, who watched her anguish grimly, planting fresh thorns in her mistress's shuddering flesh. And every day or so brought another doll's looking-glass. The jeer that accompanied the last, had been a vilely parodied verse of the child's dancing-song:

"*Ma commère etait belle!*
Hélas! dans le temps!
Ma commère etait belle!
Hélas! dans le temps! Hélas!
Pousser un soupir!
A vue de ma commère:
L'Amour n'a qu'à mourir!
Hélas!"

One may imagine the curl of Adelaide's lip on reading rubbish like this. But she read it more than once, and when she finally burned it, the accursed jingle, burr-like stuck in her memory: for she it was who had been beautiful in the time that had passed for evermore—the gossip at the first sight of whose damaged, unveiled charms Love sighed and gave up the ghost.

LIII.

MEANWHILE Juliette, nestled in her corner, stared from the window as Belgium hurried by. Bouillon, at whose station they left the train, showed a platform crowded with swaggering Prussian officers of the Crown Prince's army—some of them wounded, all upon *parole*. French ladies entering and leaving the carriages, looked daggers at their enemies. Poisoned daggers at Adelaide, who, to her secret annoyance, was recognised and familiarly greeted by two of these Teutonic warriors, one a tall and red-whiskered Bavarian Light Dragoon, the other a brown-coated Hussar of von Barnekow's Brigade.

In vain Adelaide ignored the pair and redoubled the directions she was giving to a porter. The Bavarian coolly thrust the man aside, opened the carriage-door and jumped upon the steps.

"*Meine gnädigste* . . . loveliest Countess, you won't give the go-by to your old comrade Otto? Here also is von Wissman, who claims a greeting from you!"

There was no gainsaying the boisterous good-fellowship of the officers. They superintended the removal of the luggage from the van, engaged a pair-horsed *fiacre*, and advised as to its loading. When Adelaide and her charge entered they followed uninvited, and deposited themselves on the front seat, incommoding the ladies with their long spurred boots, and filling the vehicle with the odour of cigars and wine. Both talked much; the Hussar chattered incessantly; giving details of the various actions he had been engaged in, the chance by which he had been taken prisoner, the irksomeness of being interned in Belgium until the ending of hostilities:

"Not that it will be long before the War is over. We now hold Alsace Lorraine and the country north and east of

Metz. The Crown Prince is making for Châlons; that will give the French Emperor an attack of hysterics. He has handed over the supreme command to Bazaine, and yesterday left Gravelotte for Verdun. That means Châlons, and after Châlons will be Paris. Badinguet has had enough of campaigning to last him the rest of his reign."

Adelaide asked:

"And the Prince?"

The brown Hussar puffed out his cheeks and squinted like a pantomime-mask. The Bavarian replied:

"Lulu went with papa, though we heard they had trouble to make him. He wanted to stop and kill Prussians—they're such horrible beasts, you know!"

"You droll beggar, Strelitz, shut up with your mummery," said the Hussar, leaning across him to pitch his cigar-butt away.

"Madame is fire-proof, why waste the stump of a three-mark Havana?" chuckled Strelitz, keeping his own weed alight. He went on, drolling for the benefit of his companion:

"This meeting, loveliest Countess, makes me feel a youth again—garlanding the grim temples of Bellona with the roses of the goddess of Love. You remember the classical lessons you used to give me only last winter, in your charming flat near the Linden Strasse?"

He ogled Adelaide with comic sentimentality:

"And the jovial supper-party at which I was present, when von Kessel, of the Guards Infantry, had the presumption to bring an uninvited guest!"

"Why apologise!" laughed the Hussar. "The pleasantest acquaintanceships are made by chance!"

"Ah, but this was not chance!" said the Bavarian, with mock solemnity. "It was one of those accidents that only happen by design. Von Schön-Valverden bored von Kessel frightfully to take him—left the fat fellow no peace

until he gave in. The Count is reported to have paid the penalty."

"Aha! I can imagine what happened to the youngster!" giggled the Hussar.

Replied the comedian:

"He had three losses that evening. Each one more serious than the last!"

Adelaide shrugged, but she did not look angry; indeed, through her veil her disdainful beauty assumed a smiling cast.

"Three losses," the comedian repeated, "exactly as in my own case. For he first lost his money—so did I!—we were playing baccarat that evening—then he lost his head, and finally his heart!"

"Otto, thou wert always a tease!" protested Madame, but her ill-humour had softened into conscious coquetry, and her eyes beamed radiantly through the flowers of her masking veil.

"Or he would have!" continued Otto: "had not his mother, the Countess, come flying to the rescue and carried him off, nobody knows where! . . ."

Adelaide's eyes blazed. She said in a tone of haughty nonchalance:

"Count Valverden is now with the first Army, advancing towards Metz. . . . He says he hopes to win the silver sword-knot before the close of the campaign."

"You correspond?" the Hussar asked grinning, as the driver signified impatience by kicking the back of the box-seat. Both officers got out of the carriage as Adelaide answered coldly:

"He often writes to me."

The driver, ignored, opened a little padded trap-hole in the front part of the vehicle. He clapped his mouth to it and shouted in the Flemish tongue.

"*Geef my U address!*"

Adelaide gave the name of the Hotel des Postes. The officers kissed her hand and said they would call there on the morrow. They waved as the *fiacre* rumbled out of the station. Adelaide waved back, and issued quite another direction through the driver's trap-hole. And the *fiacre* went jingling through the old-world streets of the castled town that sits on the broad flowing river whose bridge was crowded with French and Belgian officers, chatting, smoking and discussing the news of the War.

Presently they were free of the streets, roaring with the tongues of many nations, choked with trains of French wounded, Red Cross columns, Sisters, surgeons, bearers, carriages full of visitors, and more processions of officers on *parole*. The *fiacre* lumbered at a good pace behind its pair of heavy-hocked Flemish horses, along a wide, straight road, with plains on either side. And presently tall black wooden observation-towers marked the frontier where Belgian videttes and outposts amicably fraternised with French.

Kilometre posts of wood instead of stone. . . . The dear French language in the mouths of people. Breasting hills covered with woods, instead of fallow plains, intersected with level roads bordered with eternal poplar-trees.

With the joy and relief of the return Juliette's heavy heart grew lighter. Her muscles relaxed. She could unclench her hands again. For the horror she had felt at the contiguity of the German officers and the loathing their familiar address had inspired in her had been well-nigh unbearable, though she understood their language but imperfectly. And this strange woman, her self-chosen protectress, who greedily fed on an admiration so coarse, Who was she ? What was she ? The poor girl shuddered as she wondered. Of women like Adelaide she had no experience, and yet she could not silence the voice of her doubt.

When Madame good-humouredly bade her unlock travelling bags, unstrap baskets and serve both with the food and drink she had lavishly provided, Juliette, declining all offers of refreshment, waited upon her, in silence so frozen that the patience of her protectress was severely taxed.

Unaided, Madame emptied a pint bottle of champagne, a fluid which temporarily elevates the spirits, and consumed the greater part of a cold *pâté*, with pastry and fruit, winding up the repast with a Turkish cigarette and a thimbleful of cognac from the silver flask in her travelling-bag.

"How dull you are—how cold, you tiny creature!" she grumbled. "Is it blood that runs in your veins, or melted snow? From whom do you inherit this torpid nature—without vivacity, warmth, or gaiety? Your father was not lacking in fire and passion. . . . Your mother——" Her long eyes laughed wickedly. "A feminine volcano, shall we say?"

A shock went through the girl. She visibly quailed and shuddered. Through the rumbling of the *fiacre*, she heard herself speaking in a voice she hardly recognised:

"My mother. . . . Did you know my mother? And—knowing her—dare you speak of her to me? . . ."

"Dare! . . ." Adelaide threw back her handsome head in a gale of laughter, curling back her crimson lips, lavishly displaying her splendid teeth. "I dare do many things," she said, still laughing. "Conventionality . . . timidity . . . these are not characteristics distinctive of me! Nor were they ever, to do myself justice. . . . Why are we stopping at this miserable place?"

Juliette, rendered dumb by growing fear of her companion, did not answer. The carriage drew up at a cross-roads where a bridge arched the Givonne. They were upon the fringes of the village, near a country inn and posting-house. The driver had an ancient understanding with the

proprietor of this hostelry that his beasts should break down here.

He now got down from his perch. Adelaide lowered the window. The man explained by the aid of signs that the horses were quite exhausted and they were yet three miles from Sedan. The proprietor of the inn assisted at the colloquy, extending the distance by another mile—hinting at possible dangers after nightfall. He could supply an excellent supper, a comfortable double bedroom—coffee at the peep of day, a vehicle and horses to take Madame and Mademoiselle to Sedan, or wherever they chose. . . .

Finally the driver was paid enough to satisfy even his cupidity. Madame's luggage was taken upstairs, the ladies mounted to their room.

It was a low-ceiled, dampish apartment containing two bedsteads of uncomfortable aspect, with flock beds and dusty chintz draperies. Candles were lighted, put on the chimney-piece. . . . A fire of damp billets was set smoking by the efforts of the chambermaid, who was not disinclined to talk. French troops were encamped near. Let the ladies look from the window. Those lines of red and yellow lights glaring through a rising fog, marked the sites of the soldiers' watch-fires. There were officers down below drinking wine and playing cards in the *salle à manger*. Also, soldiers were drinking cider in the yard. It made one feel more safe, the presence of so many warriors. Indeed, Sedan was full of them, and all the country round about. . . . At Metz also, even more, with guns enough to kill all the Prussians in existence. The chambermaid felt confident that they would soon be driven out of France.

Still talking, she supplied hot water, and laid a little supper-table, the ladies preferring not to descend. A smoked omelette with herbs, some stewed pears, and a seed-cake furnished the supper, with a decanter of thin red wine.

Adelaide nibbled and sipped discontentedly. Juliette, being famished, made a meal. The billets refusing warmth, Madame unrobed her sumptuous person, arrayed herself in lace and lawn, enlisting the services of her charge as lady's maid, and gracefully betook herself to bed. There she leaned on her white elbow, chatting while Juliette made her own preparations for the down-lying. . . . Her tigerish mood was past. She was amiable—almost affectionate. . . . She even praised the girlish charms reluctantly unveiled in the process of undressing; remarking:

"After all, you only want style and more *tournure* to do execution among the men. Some of them actually prefer coldness. They say it gives the illusion of innocence. Have you locked the door? Yes! Then double-lock and drag a trunk before it, and shut the window and slide the bolt. . . . Pull down the blind and draw the curtain. . . . One cannot be too careful in places like these! . . ."

"But we shall be suffocated!" Juliette cried in consternation, forgetting her deadly fear of Adelaide in her craving for fresh air. And then in the ghastly face the other turned upon her, she saw the unmistakable stamp of Fear.

"What have I said? . . . What has frightened you? Are you ill? Pray tell me!" she begged.

But Adelaide waved her off, biting her pale lips to bring the blood back to them, saying harshly, "It is nothing! A spasm. I have suffered from them of late. . . . Do not stare at me as though I were hideous. Give me my reticule. . . . There! on the toilette-table. How clumsy you tiny things can be! . . ."

Trembling, Juliette handed her the gold-mounted bauble. She took a little phial from it and a measuring-glass.

"Now place one of those candles on the night-stand, beside me. One will not do—give me both! . . ."

There was laudanum in the little crystal phial. When Adelaide had measured and swallowed her dose she

breathed more easily, stared less fixedly, and those disfiguring reddish-purple streaks of Straz's handiwork showed less vividly against the creamy skin. Her suffused eyes regained clearness. She lay back among her pillows and declared herself better . . . laughed at the terror still visible in Juliette's face. . . .

"Now give me the little pistol and the pearl-handled dagger out of the inner compartment in my travelling-bag. . . . The large, deep pocket that fastens with a snap. What! you would rather not! . . . You do not like to handle them. . . . *Fi donc,* Mademoiselle! A soldier's daughter—and guilty of such cowardice! . ..."

Juliette winced at the thrust. It was her turn to bite her lips. She steadied them and mastered her voice sufficiently to say:

"I dislike to touch such weapons, because I have never learned to use them. And I will ask you, Madame, not to speak jestingly of my father to me!"

"Give me the pistol and stiletto, then!" stipulated her tormentress.

In silence Juliette took one of the candles, and set it near the travelling-bag upon the table near the supper-tray which the chambermaid had neglected to remove. She dived into the deep pocket as directed, and drew out a double-barrelled pistol, mounted in ebony and silver, and the dagger, a costly toy of Indian workmanship. Something else fell upon the floor with a faint tinkle. It was a miniature set with pearls, that had rolled under the table. She laid pistol and dagger there, took the candlestick and stooped to pick the miniature up. The portrait within the oval of pearls and gold was that of a girl-child of some five years. In the pictured face that smiled up at her with eyes as deeply blue as the spring skies of Italy, Juliette with a thrill and shock indescribable, recognised herself.

"*It was the August of* 1856. *Thou hadst five years, and thy curls were as soft and yellow as chicken-down. . . . Thy mother used to say: 'Juliette will never be black like me!'*"

The beloved voice was in her ears, with the very throb of his aching heart in it. De Bayard's daughter knelt so long upon the floor, motionless, staring at the horror, that Adelaide accused her jestingly of having fallen asleep.

"Get up! Wake! Give me my pistol and the dagger. I call them my babies—they sleep under my pillow ever since—never mind! . . . Ah! You have blown out the candle. . . . Light it at this one!—or perhaps you will have light enough without it? . . . Ugh! how cold your hand is, you chilly little frog!"

Juliette had blown out the candle so that she might unseen return the portrait to the dressing-bag. Had Straz's Sultana not been heavy with laudanum, she would have perceived this.

Now she yawned, stretched, smiled, declared herself actually sleepy, in spite of a mattress apparently stuffed with potatoes and stones. . . .

Juliette was kneeling by the other bedside, a slender, rigid little figure in a white night-robe, striving to collect her whirling thoughts sufficiently to say her prayers. When she rose up, Adelaide asked her drowsily:

"Do you pray always? . . . And what do you pray for? And for whom, tell me, you secret little thing!"

The low answer came:

"I pray for the living, Madame, and for the departed. . . . For my father and—others who are dear to me; for myself, and for my grandmother's soul!"

"For your mother?" Adelaide queried, curiously:

"I pray that my mother may repent and be forgiven!"

"Ah-h!" Adelaide's inflection was sleepily scornful. "So you think her a terrible sinner, eh, Mademoiselle?"

The white-robed figure palpably shuddered, yet the answer came unfalteringly:

"It is not for me to judge—you, Madame!"

The clean riposte pierced the consciousness that had been dulled by the opiate. There was a dreadful silence, during which the girl could hear her own heart drumming, and through the noise it made, the hiss of her mother's sharply intaken and expelled breath. Then Adelaide de Bayard shrugged, saying in a tone of drowsy irony:

"That is the most sensible utterance I have yet heard from you, *ma mignonne*. Well,—the discovery was inevitable! Now, with your leave, I am going to sleep! . . ."

And she did, while the girl sat huddled among her scanty bedclothes, clasping her knees and praying for day. Torn between unconquerable aversion towards this bold, audacious, worldly woman, and the old yearning towards the beautiful lost mother, enshrined as a demi-goddess in a young child's recollection, you may imagine Juliette's mental and physical plight.

That one should shudder at the touch of her who stood in so sacred a relation was inconceivable. . . . That one should welcome it was inconceivable also. . . . Dim conjectures as to her mother's past, as her present mode of life, were evolved from the depths of the daughter's Convent-bred ignorance. . . . Would those German officers have looked so boldly, conversed so coarsely and familiarly, if they had not had reason to believe such approaches welcome, even agreeable? . . . The lives of Phryne, Thaïs and Aspasia were missing from the pages of Juliette's School Dictionary of Classical Biography. Yet when Cora Pearl had flashed past her in the Bois, or upon the Champs Elysées, driving four mouse-coloured ponies in silver harness—wielding a jewelled parasol driving-whip,—she had instinctively averted her gaze from the face of the courtesan.

Was Juliette's mother a woman like that woman ? And why, within a few hours from their chance, accidental meeting, had she inveigled her daughter into a snare ? . . . For that some sinister purpose had prompted the proceeding, began to be clear to the poor young girl.

Love. . . . Oh, Heaven ! was the look in those hard eyes born of the divine tenderness that a mother feels for her child ? Was it not hatred that glittered from them ? Was it not revenge that had concocted the plot ?

The marriage with M. Charles Tessier, so keenly desired by the Colonel, had been quashed by his wife's kite-like swoop upon the bride. Was that story of de Bayard's having been made prisoner by Prussians true or invented ? If false, whither were they now bound ? . . . "Oh, help, Mother of Mercy, Mary most pitiful ! Pray for me that light may be given me !—teach me what I ought to do ! . . ."

Growing calmer, the reflection occurred to Juliette, that this mother so strangely encountered could not be all untender towards her daughter, or the pearl-set miniature would not have been kept. . . . This brought tears to her aching eyes, and some relief to her apprehensions. She determined, remembering that token of lingering kindness, that she would yield duty and obedience to her mother now. Until she found her all untrustworthy she would trust her. . . . She had invented freely, in setting her springes—and yet not altogether lied. . . .

Sleep did not come to Mademoiselle de Bayard that night or for many nights after. She lay staring at the curtains that met across the blinded window, until the dawn edged them with a line of glimmering gray. As the streak encroached, she rose noiselessly, and silently as the dawn itself, approached her mother's bed.

Adelaide lay upon her back with her head thrown back amidst its wealth of rich black tresses, her arms tossed out and upwards, the hands clenched, one knee a little raised. The unfastened robe of lawn disclosed the creamy beauty of her throat and the swelling contours of her magnificent bosom. The sight sent an exquisite pang to the heart of her sorrowful child. Oh God! if beauty so divine had been but chaste, what pride, what happiness to call this woman mother! To lay one's head upon that breast and weep all griefs out there! . . .

The sleeper stirred beneath the wistful gaze of her daughter. Violet shadows were round her sealed eyelids and about her nostrils and mouth. She moaned a little and murmured brokenly. . . .

"Nicolas . . . Monseigneur . . . insult . . . never pardon! . . . '*Only a woman of fashion would be capable of such infamy. . . .*' Ah, *mon Dieu!* . . ."

She cried out, and her eyes opened, staring about wildly. She asked suspiciously as they fell on Juliette:

"Have I been talking? . . . What was I saying?"

Juliette answered simply and literally:

"That only a woman of fashion would be capable of such infamy."

LIV.

They broke their fast on rolls and coffee, dressed and demanded, with the bill, the promised carriage. This was not so quickly forthcoming as the landlord of the *Coup d'Épée* had prophesied. Indeed, the debilitated conveyance of the waggonette type, drawn by one promoted cart-horse, could only be had by grace of the traveller by whom it had been previously engaged. He proved, when Adelaide swept her charge downstairs, to be a *Monsieur Anglais*, travelling for pleasure. A middle-sized, clean-shaven, in-

conspicuous, elderly man, in an ill-fitting suit of drab-colour. He sported a sealskin vest in spite of the oppressive heat of the weather, and spoke the French of the conversation-manual, with the accent it inculcates. His baldish grizzled head was covered with a straw hat bound with a preposterous light-blue ribbon. His luggage consisted of a brown calfskin bag, a portable easel, sketching-block and colour-box, and a violin-case, of which articles he took the most excessive care. Nothing could well be more respectable, or appear more harmless. Juliette breathed more freely at the sight of the elderly drab-clothed man.

He professed himself happy to accommodate the ladies with a share in the waggonette as far as Bazeilles, where he meant to take train for Verdun. Interpreting for Adelaide, who possessed no English, Juliette learned that their own destination was not Metz, but Châlons.

That drive to Bazeilles in the freshness of the morning would have been delightful under other circumstances. The night-mists yet hung white as milk over the valleys, while the breasting rises crowned with woodlands were golden in the sun. Tents of French brigades snowed over the country-side. Bugles and trumpets sometimes drowned the rushing of the Givonne, beside whose stream their road conducted them. The stubbles were full of grain-devouring wood-pigeons, too heavy even to rise and take wing when peasant-lads threw stones. The drab Englishman praised the view in the set terms of the manual, until discovering that Mademoiselle had command of the tongue of Albion, he reverted to that language with evident relief.

"For I won't deny it comes easier, though I manage to get on with the other when necessary. And since I left England—seven months ago—my poor health requiring a holiday from business—it has been necessary most of the time."

"Ask the hideous animal in the ugly clothes whether he has seen a newspaper this morning," instructed Madame. "And find out if he knows anything of the movements of the Emperor. Those miserables at the inn were absolutely ignorant, or else they would not tell!"

The drab English traveller had reason to know something of his Imperial Majesty, having recently encountered him with his suite at the village of Gravelotte, eight miles from Metz. He explained in a rambling manner, and with many divagations, that he himself had been surprised by the intrusion of War at the outset of a sketching-tour in the north-west of France, which was to have realised the ambition of his life.

"Painting from Nature and playing on the violin. . . . Those are what I may call my weaknesses," he told the ladies by-and-by.

He was moist-eyed and red-nosed and shaky-handed, which must have interfered with his brush-work and bowing. An odour of strong waters exhaled from his person and clothes. You, had you been there, could have imagined him making an inventory, serving a summons, or, mounted on a Holborn auctioneer's rostrum,—knocking down second-hand works of inferior Art to imaginary bidders, and vaunting the qualities of sticky-toned violins. Save for his garrulity, he was inoffensive; though his open conviction that his fellow-travellers were mother and daughter, caused Juliette infinite anguish and disquiet of mind.

"With regard to His Majesty the French Emperor, I was brought into contact with him unexpectedly," said the drab man. "You can picture me, young lady, in the enjoyment of my well-earned holiday, strolling as one may say, from village to village, enjoying the fresh air and the scenery, such a change after five-and-twenty years of Camberwell, the Courts of Law, and Furnival's Inn."

Adelaide complained:

"He bores me horribly, this red-nosed imbecile! Cannot he answer the question? What is he saying now?"

The drab man prattled on:

"For from the cradle, as one might say, I have been the vassal and slave of Business, having been sent by my father to a Mercantile and Legal Training College at Bromersham when only seven years old. At fifteen I was office-boy and under-clerk in the old gentleman's office. Believed in beginning at the bottom of the ladder, you see! At eighteen, articled;—again to the old gentleman! He being a solicitor and attorney with a good old-fashioned family practice, and naturally being desirous to see his son a full-blown partner in the Firm! . . ."

He sighed and shook his head sentimentally.

"No use to tell the old gentleman I had been born with other ambitions. That Art had a fascination, and the voice of Music called. . . . I used up reams of office wove-note in making pen-and-ink designs for illustrations to the books I'd read on the sly, and the plays I'd seen on the quiet. . . . I'd render popular airs on the mouth-organ to the admiration of all the other clerks. 'Now, Mr. William, let's have a Musical Selection!' they'd say whenever the old gentleman popped out. . . . I saved up my money to pay for a course of tuition in Drawing from the Round and Life Model at a Night School of Art in Soho. But I never got time. The old gentleman must have been more knowing than I suspected, for he always managed to keep my nose to the grindstone. Will you believe that I bought this box, and this easel, and the violin twenty years ago—and never got a chance to use 'em, until now? To such a degree was my liberty hectored over, and the talents that might have made me the centre of a circle of admirers, blighted by the Senior Partner and Head of the Firm. . . ."

Adelaide, growing more restive, interrupted:

"Does this fatuous person who talks so greatly afford any information or does he not?"

"—Yet I could show you a sketch of the Roman Aqueduct at Ars that would surprise you," went on the drab man, addressing Juliette, "regarded as emanating from the pencil of a simple amatoor. Also I could touch off a French chansong on the violin in a style equally creditable and gratifying,—and justifying my retirement from Business in the interests of Music and Art. But——"

He took out a plaid silk handkerchief and wiped his moist eyes with it, and wagged the grizzled head that wore the absurd blue-ribboned straw hat in a maudlin, despondent way.

"But just as I'd settled to the roving life, tramping from inn to inn and finding 'em comfortable, the country cooking tasty, and the country vintages nice,—War breaks out and spoils everything! Another week, and I should have bought a Bit of Ground!"

He mopped his eyes and snuffled a little, and put away the handkerchief:

"It was going cheap—the Chatto and farm and wine-plant and vineyards. I had a good look at the title-deeds —everything was in order there, even to a professional eye. . . . All I had to do was to put down the money. I'd have painted and fiddled, made wine and drunk it—sold what I didn't drink, and branded the vintages: 'Château Mustey, Dry, Sparkling . . . Château Mustey, Special Still.' . . . Château Mustey, sweet, preferred by ladies. . . . Stop though! It wouldn't have been that name! My name is Furnival! Excuse me, Mam'selle, but I think your lady-mother is making some remark to you. At least she impresses me with that idea."

"Madame is greatly desirous of intelligence with respect to the Emperor," Juliette explained. The talkative traveller looked aggrieved:

"Pray tell the lady I am coming to him presently. After the War broke out—Lord! what a hurrying and scurrying of soldiers. . . . Bugles blowing your head off at four o'clock in the morning—all the waggons taken to carry baggage—all the farm-horses whipped off to drag cannon . . . no more sensible business done anywhere! . . . And when the shooting began, it was a scandal! Positively perilous to visitors! Why, I've been absolutely in danger of my life! . . ."

Adelaide's foot tapped impatiently on the floor of the waggonette. Her fine eyes shot forth indignant sparks. She bit her crimson lips. The drab Englishman regarded her mildly, commenting:

"If I wasn't accustomed by this time to French ways and manners, I should take it that your mamma had a temper of her own. But it's the national method of over-working the features. . . . Not that your Emperor is given to too much expression. Heavy, he struck me as—and puffily low-spirited! And even a worse sleeper than myself, if you ask me! For I spent the night in a room over His Majesty's, the night he stopped in the inn at Gravelotte, and didn't shut my eyes for an instant with his groanings and his moanings and his trampings to and fro. . . ."

He wagged his head and pursued with solemnity:

"In the morning I peeped out of the window and saw him drive off. All sorts of French Nobs bowing and scraping. . . . Orders and Stars, and shiny carriages, and silver-mounted harness on prancing bays. . . . Yet if he had asked me I wouldn't have changed places. Thinks I, 'How much better to be Me, plain William Furnival, an honest English Commoner, than an Emperor whose crime-stained conscience keeps him broad awake o' nights!'"

Said Juliette, her eyes blue fire, two angry roses in her usually pale cheeks:

"But you, Monsieur—who also sleep badly,—is that because you have crime upon your soul ?"

"What have you said to this creature that has frightened him ?" Adelaide demanded, as the drab traveller's jaw dropped, and his red nose glowed brilliantly in a visage of dingy-white.

Juliette translated. Said Madame, regarding the perturbed Mr. Furnival with a glance of superb indifference:

"He is a runaway husband of some Englishwoman who keeps a *pension*. Or the absconding clerk of a London notary."

Whatever he may or not have been, he fell silent after the little passage here recorded. At Bazeilles, where the driver was paid, and the waggonette dismissed, though he entered the same train of vilely dirty third-class carriages and goods-trucks, he travelled in a compartment remote from that selected by his companions of the drive.

At Verdun they learned that the railway-bridge below Metz had been blown up by M. de Bazaine's Engineers, the line beyond being in Prussian hands. . . . And at this point the drab gentleman got out, hugging his violin-case, bag, and artist's fit-out. Juliette saw him swallowed up in a roaring crowd of mobilists from the Ardennes, who rushed upon and instantly crammed solid, every corner of the train.

A good-looking officer entering with the deluge, apologised to the ladies in a well-bred, easy way.

"It is inconvenient, Mesdames, but at the same time necessary. . . . I take these little ones to Châlons to be incorporated in the New Army of MacMahon. . . . They are rough, as you perceive, and very few are yet in uniform. But blue cloth and red cloth are less important than chassepôts, and they have them and can use them,—these little ones of mine ! And when they receive orders to march

north and give a helping hand to M. de Bazaine—I prophesy that boots or no boots, they will keep up with the best !"

Adelaide smiled witchingly on the speaker, plied the archery of her fine eyes, evoking admiring glances from the officer and his uncouth half-clad, half-trained mobilists. She said she had no doubt of the courage of these sons of Western France. She had heard, she added, that the Emperor was at Châlons, but that H.I.M. intended to resort to Paris, having surrendered to another the *bâton* of supreme command.

" ' To Paris ' !" The officer shrugged. " Alas ! at such a crisis in the affairs of the nation, Paris would be the last shelter for the French Emperor. It is no longer a secret that the Emperor has already left Châlons with the Grand Headquarter Staff and the First Corps of the Army of Mac-Mahon. . . . Rheims is the destination—that intelligence is also public property. . . ."

" And the Prince ?" Adelaide asked eagerly.

" Monseigneur the Prince Imperial left for Rheims with the Emperor, but will be sent on from there to Rethel, with his carriages, and an escort of Imperial Body Guards under Colonel Watrin. His three *aides-de-camp*, Colonel Lamey, Colonel Comte Clary, and Commandant Duperré of the battleship *Le Taureau* attend him. Comte d'Aure is equerry now instead of old Bachon ! . . . Pardon, Madame ? . . . You descend here . . . ? But I thought you were travelling to Châlons ! . . . Permit me to open the carriage door !"

And the prattling officer, who had promised himself a charming *vis-à-vis* upon the journey, must needs leap out upon the platform, arrest the guard's arm in the act of signalling the start. . . . Adelaide was handed down. . . . Juliette followed with an avalanche of Madame's travelling bags and parcels . . . a discontented porter was called upon to rescue her trunks and portmanteaux from the van. . . .

The signal fell, the train steamed out of the station. Juliette, white and fagged, sitting on an up-piled luggage truck, was asked by Adelaide:

"Where do you think we are going now, Mademoiselle?"

Came the weary answer:

"I do not know, Madame. . . . First it was to Metz and then to Châlons. Now, it may be to Rheims, as the Emperor is there?"

Adelaide returned tormentingly:

"But we are not going to Rheims."

A thrill passed through Juliette.

"My father is not a prisoner, then?"

"My faith!" said Adelaide, shrugging with ostentatious indifference, "he is as he was yesterday. But all the same, my little one, we do not go to Rheims, but to Rethel. . . . Tell me—you have brought with you a walking-costume that is tolerable? Something more becoming than this lugubrious garment you have on!"

Juliette replied in the negative. Adelaide's look was coldly scornful as she scrutinised the little figure before her. Could this really be her daughter, this pale, peaked, elfish thing? . . .

What sloping shoulders, what tragic, haunted eyes, what a long upper lip, what lack of vivacity and elegance. . . . Her grandmother—that well-loathed woman, lived again in de Bayard's child.

Monseigneur the Prince Imperial must have curious taste in feminine beauty to have been smitten with this stiff little white-faced *mannequin*. Whom de Bayard worshipped . . . whom even Straz had admired. . . . What were his words. . . . "*A little Queen of Diamonds, fresh as a rosebud!*" Grand Dieu! . . . how comical! "*A rare jewel. . . . A chic type. . . . A pocket edition of Psyche, before that little affair with Cupid.*"

Well, Cupid waited at Rethel. . . . Her red lips writhed with the jeering laughter she stifled. Two devils of mockery looked through the windows of her eyes. And with the swift understanding of this stranger that came of their close, intimate relationship, Juliette encountering that look, said mentally:

"She hates me! My mother hates me! For that reason she sought me out and told me that false tale. . . . Because of that she lured me away with her from Brussels! Because of that she has planned to do something. . . . Oh! my father, if only you knew! . . ."

LV.

The Hope of a tottering and crumbling Empire was installed at the Prefecture of Rethel, a picturesque, old-world river-town of many bridges, and houses with quaint carved gables, slanting floors, and low ceilings crossed by heavy beams.

He had arrived late on the previous evening. There had been no flags, no bands, no popular ovation, no delirium of enthusiasm in greeting the Imperial heir. Press organs were now telling incredulous Parisians that in consideration of the Prince's weariness the people had foregone their privilege of welcome. In honest truth, the unlucky townsfolk were too sad and sick-hearted to cheer.

A great battle was impending in the neighbourhood of Metz. The First and Second Armies of United Germany had crossed the Moselle, wheeled right-about-face and were closing in on Bazaine, who had failed in his attempt to retire upon Châlons by the Verdun Road. The Prussian Crown Prince had come out of the Vosges, and was marching North instead of moving upon Châlons. If his vanguard clashed with MacMahon's patched-up Army there would

be trouble. . . . Everyone expected trouble, the soil of France had been sown so thickly with the bad seed from which great national disasters spring, even before it had been ploughed by German shells. . . . The coming tragedy chilled and numbed as the iceberg chills the senses of the passenger in the Atlantic liner's warm deck-cabin, long before the keel grates, and the white fog lifts, and shows the towering Death on which the doomed vessel is being hurled.

The deep dejection of the officers around the Heir Imperial could not be covered by any well-meant attempts at disguise. The rumours that came through the fog into which Bazaine had vanished were horribly disquieting. They waited upon thorns, for a telegram from the Emperor, conveying intelligence on which they might rely.

There was something in the situation of the lonely, proud young creature they surrounded that made the heart bleed as you looked at him. So helpless and yet so representative of unfettered Power, so ignorant in the ways of the world and yet so conversant with its outward forms and ceremonies, so palpably the last frail link upon a chain that was being hacked through by the Prussian sword.

He had grown older and thinner since the days of July, and his fresh, fine colour had faded to paleness. There was a frown upon the open forehead now, the gay, confident regard had changed to sullenness. The blue eyes were less lustrous. The silky chestnut hair was rumpled and duller. Care had overshadowed the boyish head with her heavy sable wing.

The arrival of the previous night had been sudden and unexpected, the startled authorities had been rarely put about to find fitting accommodation for their Emperor's son. This morning Monseigneur had been hurried out of his bed at the Prefecture to receive the apologies of the Prefect, an Imperialistic vine-grower, who had been absent in the interests of his affairs.

"Your Imperial Highness will be aware that this is a critical month with owners of vineyards. The vines have borne well and the grapes are ripening magnificently. Next month the champagne-making ought to be in full progress. But the lack of hands terribly hampers us. . . . Women cannot replace the men who are skilled in the various processes. And who knows——"

The Prefect broke off, for the Sub-Prefect had nudged him openly. Even if the tide of War should turn, and France be freed from her invaders, who knew whether any of those grape-pickers and sorters and pressers, Reservists and volunteers and conscripts who had been called out to carry the chassepôt against the Prussians, would ever return to their countryside again? Who knew whether they would not be thrown as ripe grapes into Death's huge wine-press? Perhaps their red blood was foaming in the vat even now.

Who knew whether those rich, prosperous vineyards on the Aisne would not be trampled into sticky mashiness under the ruthless feet of Prussian Army Corps? If the rumours were correct, an advance upon Paris might take place at any moment. True, MacMahon's Army was said to be covering the road to the capital.

But MacMahon had been already beaten terribly. . . . Recollecting it, the Prefect shuddered in his well-polished shoes.

But he said his say and shook the young hand graciously offered him, and got out of his own wife's drawing-room as awkwardly as though he had been one of his own clerks. While the Sub-Prefect, a sharp-visaged little man, who combined the office of public notary with the trade of wool-stapler, trotted after him, very much at his ease.

"How you sweat! Wipe your head and your neck, too," counselled the notary. "Otherwise your cravat will

be a perfect wisp and Madame will certainly take you to task!"

"You have such *sangfroid*, my good M. Schlitte. I envy you, I do, positively!" stuttered the Prefect, puffing and blowing and mopping: "Royalty invariably dazzles me. . . . I tremble . . . I blunder. . . . In a word, I make a fool of myself! At this moment I am tortured by the weight of my responsibilities. . . . True,—His Highness is well guarded! —true, the Army of Châlons is somewhere or other in the neighbourhood! . . . But the daring of these Prussian horsemen . . . the danger of a surprise! . . ."

"A surprise. . . . Nonsense, my dear sir. The thing is impossible!"

And M. Schlitte, who was said upon the strength of his queer French accent to be a native of Strasbourg, soothed the Prefect, and grinned like a rat-trap as he betook himself home. Inhabiting a riverside villa in the neighbourhood, from which residence—we may suppose for the better conduct of his extensive business—a private telegraphic installation connected him with Rheims, Paris, Brussels, Luxembourg—and when necessary—Berlin, it would have been possible to have made arrangements for that very contingency. His suggestions were not adopted at the Prussian Headquarters, but his zeal was approved in the right place. He became Prefect of Rethel a little later, when Berlin was settled at Versailles.

He stopped now, on his way back to his villa, to send the town-band round to the Place of the Prefecture and to bribe some loafers with small silver, to mix with the crowd and cheer for the Emperor and the Prince. Consequently, a drum, trombone, cornet, and ophicleide shortly made their appearance before the Imperial lodgings. . . . *La Reine Hortense* and *Partant Pour La Syrie* entertained Monseigneur while he breakfasted. Since then he had

thrice been summoned out upon the balcony to acknowledge the acclamations of the loyal populace of Rethel.

It was pouring rain, and the knots of spies, loafers and genuine enthusiasts were sheltered by umbrellas. The very fowls that pecked between the cobbles had a listless and draggled air. The boy shivered as he turned from the dismal outdoor prospect to contemplate the Empire hangings, ormolu girandoles, and obsolete, scroll-backed chairs and claw-foot tables, gracing the Prefect's wife's reception-room. He told himself that it was horrible, even when one waited for the news of certain victory, to be shut up in a beastly hole like this.

He nearly jumped for joy when the name of M. de Straz was brought him by his equerry. He remembered the Roumanian agent, who had previously been presented to him.

"Pray bring him quickly, M. le Comte," he said eagerly to M. d'Aure, who had replaced old M. Bachon. "It is possible that he may bring a message from the Emperor."

He coloured, and his eyes regained a little of their old brightness. The green-and-gold equerry, who loved him, as did every member of his household, was glad to see him interested, for more reasons than one.

Straz, known to be a secret agent of the Emperor, and hailing from Rheims, where his employer was now,—Straz might well amuse the Prince while his protectors waited for an Imperial telegram. Meanwhile the bodyguard about the Prefecture was unostentatiously doubled, the carriages and the baggage were secretly held in readiness for a move.

You can imagine Straz, with his profile and beard of a courtier of old Nineveh, bowing over the boyish hand, and rolling his jet-black, glittering eyes. He had looked better in his Astrachan-trimmed travelling jacket, than in the tight-waisted, closely buttoned, black frock-coat and pearl-gray trousers of ceremony, and the inky river of black silk

cravat that flowed over the expanse of white shirt-front now covering his Herculean chest.

He wore white spats, which made his short legs appear shorter. A bouquet adorned his buttonhole—pink carnation and tuberose. Its cloying fragrance hung heavily on the damp air of the Prefecture reception-room, as the boy pleasantly said:

"Good-day, M. de Straz, do you come to us from the Emperor?"

"Yes, my Prince, and no! . . ." Straz had long ago got rid of his cold, yet a certain thickness characterised his consonants. He shrugged his great shoulders and smiled, showing his dazzling double curves of solid human ivory. "I come from Rheims, where His Imperial Majesty is making history. . . . I am not charged with any message from him!"

The boy's face fell. He said, with a brave effort to conquer his disappointment: "I am impatient, Monsieur, for news of another victory. It is so long since the engagement of Saarbrück and that was only a little one. You are an officer in the Army of Roumania, you have told me. You are aware even better than I, that military plans take time to develop . . . and that Papa has every confidence in the generalship of M. de Bazaine. . . . If I were five or six years older I should be admitted to the Councils of the Imperial État Major. . . . I should understand the reasons for these changes which puzzle me. . . . But one thing I should like to ask. . . ." He flushed and glanced round nervously. "They do not believe in Paris or London that we are being . . . beaten? . . . I beg of you to answer me candidly!"

Straz drew himself up dramatically, expanding his huge chest, and curling his parted moustache. His fierce black eyes, staring from their great curved arches, glittered like balls of polished jet. . . .

"They do not, my Prince! They wait for the Star of the Bonapartes to rise resplendent from a sea of gore shed from Prussian veins. . . . They wait, as the world waits, for the Empire to emerge more glorious than ever from this conflict, which will restore to her for ever her lost Provinces of the Rhine. It may be that the Coronation of Napoleon IV. will be solemnised in the Cathedral of Cologne. . . . Aha, my Prince, have I won a smile at last?"

He looked, despite the frock-coat, more than ever like some ancient warrior of Assyria, marching in a carved and painted procession along the walls of some unearthed palace of Nineveh or Babylon. And so admirable an actor was he that the sick heart of the boy now warmed at his simulated fire, and gladdened at his deceptive words of hope.

"I had pictured my Imperial Prince," he went on, "in brighter and less gloomy surroundings, with sympathetic and delightful companions to alleviate his exile from home."

He had touched the wrong chord. The slender, well-made figure was drawn up proudly. The delicate brows frowned, the lips quivered as the boy said:

"Monsieur, it is not 'exile' when an officer is ordered on Active Service. . . . And I am with the French Army, whose uniform I wear. For the moment the Emperor, my commanding officer, has ordered me to remain here. . . . I did wrong to grumble—I shall do so no more!"

Straz grinned and bowed to cover his momentary confusion. Why had he used the indigestible word? He touched his buttonhole bouquet and said with a treacly inflection:

"There are no violets—it is not the proper season. . . . Does Monseigneur remember when the purple blooms reached him regularly at intervals, one timid scrap of paper hiding among the slender stems? . . . And would

he, did he know how the sender languished for news of him —entrust me with one pencilled message of kindness that might restore the rose to a fading cheek ?"

The clear-eyed, fresh face of the boy he harangued underwent several changes during this windy apostrophe. For one brief instant it flushed and brightened eagerly, then it frowned with perplexity, then it twitched with the evident desire to laugh.

He said, controlling his amusement with his grace of good-breeding:

" Monsieur, if it was a lady who sent me those violets, pray tell her that she was very good to do so, and that I thank her very much. And since she asks for a message— perhaps this will do as well ?"

He turned to the writing-table, where some sheets, covered with clever pen-and-ink caricatures, lay on the blotter, and took up a rough little outline drawing of a landscape, marked with lines of dots and written over with notes. He said ingenuously, offering this to the Roumanian:

" See, Monsieur, this is a mere sketch of the affair at Saarbrück. I did it to send my tutor at Paris, but M. Filon shall have another one. . . . If the lady has sons of my age, no doubt they will be able to draw far better. Nevertheless, here it is !"

Under the date of August 2nd, he had signed it, with a touch of boyish vanity:

" *Under fire for the first time.*
" *Your affectionate*
" *Louis Napoleon.*"

" What genius !—what a gift ! How gracious an act of kindness on the part of your Imperial Highness !"

Straz grabbed the little scrawl eagerly, pressed his moist scarlet lips to it with theatrical devotion—made a tre-

mendous flourish of putting it away in a pocket-book, and bestowing this receptacle near the region of his heart.

"Though the lady has no sons—she is not even yet married," he hinted. "Dare I confide a secret to Monseigneur ?—she is a young and beautiful girl !"

Monseigneur had been promising himself to caricature Straz at the next opportunity, not forgetting to make the most of his profile, hair, and beard. Young and beautiful girls were no novelties to Louis Napoleon, accustomed to do the honours of Versailles and Saint Cloud to the muslin-clad daughters of the sparkling coquettes who frequented the Imperial Circle. He began, struggling with the boredom that began to oppress him:

"If the young girl is your *fiancée,* Monsieur, or your daughter——"

The speaker broke off at the sound of hoofs and wheels on the cobblestones of the Place, the bump of a carriage-step let down, hitting the kerb before the Prefecture. . . . Someone had arrived with a message from the Emperor; or perhaps it was only the Prefect's wife returning from an airing. . . . Straz would have been other than himself had he failed to seize the opportunity:

"Monseigneur, Mademoiselle de Bayard is not affianced. She has hitherto declined all alliances proposed as advantageous—it is said her affections are secretly engaged ! . . ."

His smirk revolted even while it fascinated. He said, rolling his glistening black eyes about the apartment—shrugging his great shoulders, laying a thick white, squat-nailed finger mysteriously against his carmine lips:

"Engaged since a little *rencontre* that took place in the month of January. . . . There were disturbances in Paris—which the troops had been called out to quell. Riding with M. de Frossard in the Avenues of the Champs Élysées, your Highness passed close by a young girl in a cab. She

cried out, '*Vive le Prince Impérial!*' . . . She threw a knot of violets, which struck your horse on the shoulder. . . . You had the flowers in your hand, Monseigneur, when you rode away."

"Ah, now I remember!" The boy's blush became him. "Or I should say I have not forgotten. And where is she now, Monsieur?"

"Where is Mademoiselle de Bayard? Your Imperial Highness would like to know?"

Straz, who had thrilled with a sportsman's joy at the curtsey of the float betokening a nibble, would have given his soul to know himself. . . . Now as he delayed, with the air of one who momentarily holds back something eagerly waited for, the equerry knocked and entered, approached and whispered to the Prince.

LVI.

"But surely, M. le Comte, it would please me to receive these two ladies. M. de Straz has just been speaking of Mademoiselle de Bayard."

And he dismissed Straz, who for once had been stricken speechless; giving his hand to him and saying: "I am very much obliged by your visit, Monsieur!"

The equerry retired, shepherding the unstrung Roumanian. The Prince waited, looking at the door.

He heard footsteps descending the stairs, a slight bustle in the hall, or so it seemed to him. Once a raised voice cried out something, drowned in the buzzing of the crowd that now gorged the Place of the Prefecture.

It still rained. The brass helmets of the Fire-Brigade and the black schakos of the local police strung out along the edge of the pavement, showed as fringing a solid mass of dripping umbrellas; there were clumps of more privi-

leged umbrellas in the middle of the Place, where a hackney-carriage now stood, doubtless the vehicle that a moment previously had stopped before the door. The Cent Gardes had their undress cocked-hats on; their blue-caped mantles, pulled out in cavalry-fashion over the hindquarters of their tall brown horses, shed off the merciless downpour like penthouse roofs. . . .

Brr! It was chilly. Why did not Mademoiselle come? Such delay was rather a breach of etiquette.

Meanwhile, there upon the blotter lay a sheet of paper, with an unfinished caricature upon it—masterly, considering that a mere boy had drawn it—representing M. Thiers, bald, spectacled, oracularly smiling, in the guise of a gobbling turkey-cock.

M. Thiers would keep. The Prince chose another sheet, and began his portrait of the Roumanian, humming a song, popular with the African infantry-regiments, in capital tune and time. "*Gentil Turco*" had been half sung through when the door opened. The crisp grizzled curls, tanned soldierly face, waxed moustache, and green-and-silver uniform of the equerry reappeared upon the threshold, ushering in a small young lady. . . . D'Aure said, as the boy laid down his pen, rose and came towards them:

"Monseigneur, I bring the young lady of whom I spoke to you, daughter of Colonel de Bayard, 777th Chasseurs of the Emperor's Guard. She has convinced me of her identity by showing me a portrait, and a letter from her father. . . . She begs me to assure you that she will not detain you longer than ten minutes. For that space of time I will return to the lady downstairs." He added at the Prince's glance of enquiry: "The lady is the wife of a French officer, and accompanied Mademoiselle de Bayard. As I went downstairs just now with M. de Straz, we encountered both ladies in the vestibule. A giddiness seized the elder, she cried out and swooned away."

The Prince said:

"Pray give orders that the sick lady is to have every attention!"

D'Aure answered that the wife of the Prefect was with Madame even then. He saluted, and repeated with an accent of finality:

"For the space of ten minutes, Monseigneur. . . ."

Then he bowed to Mademoiselle de Bayard, and went quickly out of the room.

The Prince began, with a touch of boyish pompousness:

"We have met before, Mademoiselle. My thanks for the violets!"

For he knew this face with cheeks so fairly rose-tinted, with eyes that shone brilliant as blue jewels from their covert of black lashes, with the softly-smiling mouth. The dull moth shone out a butterfly in the radiance of the joy that overbrimmed her. She was near her Prince Imperial, Juliette de Bayard, who was not so much loyal as Loyalty incarnate, to whom the tawdry figure of the Emperor was invested with godlike splendour, in whose esteem the Empire was France—her France. . . .

She was attired as she had been when she left Brussels with Adelaide. Only a fichu of black and white Malines lace that she had brought in the handbag containing linen and toilet requisites, had been pinned about her narrow, sloping shoulders, and a tiny bonnet matching this was perched upon her magnificent coils of cloudy-black hair. Her deft fingers had fashioned it in a few minutes out of the long ends of the over-ample fichu. A bunch of fragrant red roses had been pinned upon her bosom by Madame. She had purchased out of her own slender resources a fringed gray silk parasol, and a pair of little gray kid gloves. And in this hastily arranged toilette she looked elegant, refined, exclusive as any slender aristocrat of the Faubourg St.

Germain. You would never have suspected the tumult beneath her sedate composure. Yet she thrilled in every fibre as she swept her stateliest curtsey before the slender boy in the unassuming uniform of a subaltern of infantry.

"Monseigneur is too good to remember so infinitely trifling an occurrence . . . more than gracious to consent to receive me now! But that my dear father is a prisoner in the hands of the Prussians, I would not dare to intrude upon the privacy of my Prince. Oh, Monseigneur!—of your pity prevail upon the Emperor to obtain the exchange of my father for some German officer of equal rank in his Army! Think, oh, pray!—think how I . . ."

She stopped to control herself . . . felt for her handkerchief to dry the tears that were blinding her . . . dropped the scrap of cambric upon the Aubusson carpet gracing the drawing-room of the Prefecture. The Prince picked the handkerchief up as Mademoiselle hastily stooped to recover it . . . their heads encountered in the act. The bump was a hard one,—Juliette could have sunk into the earth with confusion. . . . But the Prince rubbed his forehead, grinned and called out like any other schoolboy . . . .

"My word! that was a stunner! I do hope you're not hurt? Are you, as it happens, Mademoiselle?"

"No, no, Monseigneur! But you? . . ."

"I am all right! Saw lots of stars, though!"

He burst out laughing. And so infectious was the peal of merriment, that for one blissful moment of forgetfulness Juliette joined in.

"To laugh does the heart good," the boy assured her. He went on. "Do not be unhappy, for I will telegraph to the Emperor. He never denies me anything I ask him. . . . Depend upon it, he will do everything in his power for your father, Mademoiselle!"

She looked all thanks, saying in her voice of silver:

"I shall pray with redoubled fervour for His Imperial

Majesty. And for you, Monseigneur—be well assured of it! Now, with all my gratitude, I will retire if your Highness permits?"

She swept her curtsey, and would have withdrawn then had not Monseigneur called out eagerly:

"No, no! We have still eight of our ten minutes! Don't go! . . . I do so like the way you talk. . . . *Mon Dieu!* What would the Empress say to me if she knew that I had left a lady standing! Pray sit down here, Mademoiselle!"

He turned round the writing-chair in which he had been sitting, made her take it—perched himself upon the corner of the writing-table, a schoolboy of fifteen in spite of his uniform, pouring out his heart to a girl older than he.

"It was horrible here until you came! . . . I was so lonely. Everybody looks so strange, and no news comes through. It would have been better to have stayed at Metz, where there is fighting. But no! We were compelled to return to Châlons. . . . On our way we were nearly caught by the German cavalry. They are terribly daring . . . they even ventured into our lines at Longeville. . . . But we got to Verdun and travelled to Châlons in a third-class carriage. Frightfully dirty, and full of things that bit. . . . And I washed my face in a thick glass tumbler, out of which I had drunk some wine they brought me. . . . Fact, I assure you! . . . But we soldiers don't mind hardships. . . . We get used to them, Mademoiselle!"

She looked up at the brightened face with the tenderness of an elder sister. He went on with increasing animation, and growing confidence:

"Do you see that little black box standing there in the corner? That's my officer's kit—all the baggage we're allowed to have on Active Service. There are other boxes

with other things . . ." he blushed. "The valets look after them. . . . But this I keep under my own eye. And here ! . . . This I hold as a great treasure. Do you think I would show it to everyone ? . . . *Non, merci !* . . . Behold, Mademoiselle !"

He took from a pocket beneath his tunic and showed her a splinter of rusty iron wrapped in an envelope.

" Guess what this is ! A bit of a real German bombshell. . . . It burst quite close to the Emperor and me. . . . I thought a lot of old iron was being shot out of a cart, there was such a racket. . . . This should be a keepsake for the friend one loves above all, should it not? Otherwise I would give it you, Mademoiselle !"

She said:

" Monseigneur is too generous. . . . I need no token by which to remember him ! . . . Have I not the remembrance of the sympathy and condescension with which my Prince has listened to a daughter's prayer. . . . Now indeed I must take leave of Monseigneur ! . . ."

He persisted with boyish eagerness:

" No, no ! M. d'Aure will certainly return at the end of our ten minutes. And I do like you so much, Mademoiselle ! . . . Will you write and tell me when the Emperor obtains the release of M. le Colonel ? . . . Will you let me hear how you liked the little sketch I gave M. de Straz for you?"

She was puzzled, and looked it:

" Monseigneur will pardon me, but the name of M. de Straz is that of a stranger. . . . Yet he has received from Monseigneur a message for me ?" . . .

Louis Napoleon explained. She listened with a gravity that chilled his amusement over the message he had sent to the supposedly elderly sender of the violets.

She said, looking at him steadily with her sincere eyes:

" I sent Monseigneur no violets, with messages written or otherwise. To have done so would have been presump-

tuous, and lacking in delicacy. . . . If this M. de Straz were but here. . . . If Monseigneur could but describe him ! . . ."

Monseigneur caught up the unfinished caricature:

" Look, Mademoiselle ! This is he !"

It was he. . . . The Assyrian head, great torso, and short legs had been grotesquely exaggerated. But the ferocity, sentimentality, and sensuality mingling in the exotic temperament of the Roumanian, had been conveyed with a mastery of technique and a grasp of character astonishing, considering the artist's youth. And seeing, Juliette recognised the man they had encountered in the vestibule. Just as he had passed them, Adelaide had cried out, and sunk down helplessly in a genuine swoon.

" Ah, yes, Monseigneur, I have seen this gentleman, but a few moments ago. We encountered him at the instant of entering the house. But I do not know him—I have never before met him ! Why, then, should M. de Straz speak familiarly of me ?"

The boy said, with a tactfulness that was ingratiating:

" Never mind ! . . . He was playing some stupid trick ! . . . He shall be punished if he offends you. See ! I am tearing up the ugly picture !"

" Oh ! Monseigneur !"

She was too late to save the drawing. He went on, tossing away the bits:

" Meanwhile—since the sketch I meant for you has been given to this person, you shall have my shell-splinter, though at first I meant it for—Cavaignac."

He had never uttered this name, about which so many lonely day-dreams clung, in the hearing of any second person. He could hardly believe that he had done so now as he went on:

" Take my souvenir, and shut your hand over it, and promise me you will never part with it. If you will, I can tell you about Cavaignac—my friend, Mademoiselle !"

She complied with his wish, smiling at the tone of authority. She thought, looking in the beautiful frank blue eyes, that Cavaignac must be proud of his high place in this princely young heart.

"He is brave, Mademoiselle, and handsome and wonderfully clever. Once he gained the second prize for Greek translation at the Concours Général. And Greek is horribly difficult. M. Edeline could never teach it me. I find the grammar so dreadfully dull! And yet Alexander the Great was a Greek general, and would have told me all about his campaigns in the Greek language. . . . I think I must find it hard to study because the figures of people mean more to me than letters and words! . . . I like better to draw caricatures of my masters than to listen to them!"

Juliette said, with something maternal in her accent:

"That is unwise, Monseigneur. . . . For the better we learn, the sooner we part with the teachers, do not we?"

He said, in a tone of wounded pride rather than vanity:

"I have always attended carefully to my military Governor when he gave us lessons in scientific warfare. For a Napoleon must always be a soldier and a strategist. . . . Riding came easily—anybody can learn to ride well! . . . When I have pleased my tutors most, my reward has been—unless it was in July or August—a day with the stag-hounds at Fontainebleau, or St. Germain or Compiègne. . . . The Emperor has given me two magnificent Irish hunters. . . ." He added with *naïve* boyish vanity: "And the uniform of our Imperial Hunt is splendid, you know. . . . Gold-laced cocked hat with white plumes, green coat with crimson velvet facings, white leathers and jack-boots. Last night I dreamed I was hunting with Cavaignac . . . the brown forest flying by as we galloped through the frosty fern. . . . The sky was pale red, and a diamond star hung just under the tip of the new moon of November. We were foremost of all when the stag turned to bay at the Pools of

Saint Pierre. . . . Then the horns sounded the *hallali*, the Chief Huntsman offered me the knife, and I said to him: '*M. Leemans, you will give it to my friend, M. Cavaignac!*' . . ."

"And then, Monseigneur? . . ."

He had told the dream with unexpected spirit and fire. That gallop through the wintry forest-rides had been stimulatingly real to Juliette. She had thrilled as the hard-pressed buck had leaped into the pool, and turned with antlers lowered against the ravening jaws of the pack. Now, though she shrank from the thought of the spilled blood—she wanted to hear the rest of it. She wished always to remember this story, told solely for her, by the son of her Emperor. . . .

"Shall I tell you? The end is not as nice as the beginning or the middle. . . ." He hesitated, frowning a little, then took up the broken thread: "I thought I took the knife and held it out to *him*, and he suddenly snatched it and I felt the blade pierce my heart right through. . . . He said, with his dark, bright eyes on mine: '*Son of my father's enemy, I slay despots, not animals!*' . . . And I felt the hot blood bubbling in my throat as I answered: '*You have killed a great faith and a great love!*'"

It was rhetoric of a bombastic, youthful kind, but not without pathos. His lips quivered. He nipped them together, and blinked away the stinging salt moisture that had risen in his bright eyes. Juliette said, aching to console him:

"Dreams go by contraries, according to my schoolmates of the Convent. Your friendship with M. Cavaignac will not be severed by the blade of a hunting-knife."

He shook his head.

"Or rather it is by my hand that the stab will be given. . . . Yet how could that be, when I like him so very, very much? . . . Is it not strange, I have never spoken to

Cavaignac, and yet I would have chosen him for my companion above all others, before even Espinasse or Chino Murat ! . . ."

" I think I understand. . . ." Juliette said, feeling the tug of his craving for affection and sympathy, realising the loneliness that had found relief in hero-worship, and heartily pitying her Emperor's son. " When the heart speaks, one cannot shut one's ears, one must listen always. . . . Among hundreds of faces there is one that paints itself upon the memory . . . there is one voice that makes good music when others only tire the ear. . . . There is one nature that seems more open, fresh, and candid than others. . . . Without knowing that you do so, you continually compare it with them. . . . And when you are sad or lonely, you would wish that person to be near you. . . . You remember his grey eyes with specks of brown and golden in them, and the curly hair, and the pleasant lips. You regret that when you met him you were not more charming, more amiable. . . . You feel chagrin to remember that you were neither of these things. . . . You would like to hold out the hand as they do in England, and say, ' Pardon, pardon, that I misunderstood you, my friend !' "

The boy's blue eyes rounded. His fair brows puckered in perplexity. Too well-bred to interrupt, he listened with increasing surprise.

" Pardon that I regarded you as a brusque, untidy boy, when you had been robbed, and were homeless, and suffering from hunger. For Monica's sake you hid it. And I applaud that noble silence ! I admire you with all my heart ! . . ."

The Prince broke in:

" But Cavaignac has not been robbed, and who ever said he was hungry ? He lives with Madame, his mother . . . they are not rich, certainly ! As Madame is a widow and he an only son, he is exempt from military service. He is

to embrace the profession of Literature—he will write great books or great plays, or edit a newspaper. . . . And I would like to help him to climb to the very top of the ladder. . . . Secretly—because he would never accept anything that came from me! . . . Am I stupid, Mademoiselle?"

She said with warmth that covered a slight confusion, caused by that slip of the tongue an instant before:

"Ah, no, indeed! but very kind and generous. Perhaps, if it were possible, M. Cavaignac would be proud and glad to know you were his friend. It may be that the affection he inspires in you, he returns, though he does not own it. There can be no harm in thinking this, at least!"

The Prince said with animation:

LVII.

"I SAW him, I am convinced, when we left Saint-Cloud, outside the station near the Gate of Orleans. He stood apart from the soldiers and the people. . . . He was all in black, and had grown older and taller. He looked at me earnestly, and slightly raised his hat as the carriage drove up. I saluted in answer, and the Empress asked me: '*Who is that grave young man? Do you know him?*' I said: '*My mother, I have never spoken to him in my life!*' . . . You would have thought the Empress very brave, if you had seen her, Mademoiselle. Nobody could have guessed she had been weeping. Though the night before we left for Metz . . . when she came to me in my bed . . ."

His lips twitched and one big tear brimmed over, and splashed on the sleeve of his piou-piou's uniform. He flushed bright red, and whisked it off as though it were a wasp that would have stung:

"She brought me a new medal to hang on the collar I wear always." He slid a finger inside the edge of his stiff

military stock, and hooked up an inch of gold chain. "It has on one side a figure of Our Blessed Lady crushing the head of the serpent, and on the other there is the Cross with two hearts. The Holy Father has blessed it, it was sent to Rome purposely.... Mothers are anxious when their sons are called upon Active Service.... It is natural, is it not?"

Juliette's eyes were wet with pity for the Empress. She bent her head in assent. The boy went on, shrugging his slender shoulders:

"For me—I like better to have soldiers about me than a lot of people in embroidered tail-coats. If I had been twenty I should have been at Wörth with the Duke of Magenta.... I would have died at the head of my troops rather than have consented to that shameful retreat.... '*Over my body!*' ... that is what I would have said to them.... '*Do you wish me to dishonour the blood of Napoleon the Great?*' "

He crossed to the fireplace and stood upon the Turkey hearthrug, a boyish figure reflected in the great Venetian mirror that hung above the carved stone mantelpiece. The outpouring had relieved the nervous tension; the red flush had died out of his fair temples, the smooth forehead was no longer disfigured with a scowl.

"If I might only have remained with the Army at Metz, I would have asked nothing better. But instead of staying to fight the Prussians, we drove away when they came in sight. It was ignominious.... It made me feel horribly! ... And the Emperor would not show it, but I know he suffered too. Then the camp was beastly.... There was no pretence of discipline. Their officers could hardly restrain the mobilists. There was even mutiny among those who had returned from Alsace Lorraine—the Algerian troops of the Army of MacMahon!"

His agitation made him stutter, as the words came pouring from him.

"They wanted to be led once more against the Germans! —to be revenged for all their losses and misfortunes! . . . I understood why they were difficult. . . . They did not understand why we did not march at once to the north-east frontier. No more did I. . . . I was unreasonable, like them! But now we are advancing—soon, soon you will hear something! . . . We will effect a junction of our Army with M. de Bazaine's, and sweep the Prussians out of France!"

He was walking up and down, swinging his arms, gesticulating, grinding his heels into the arabesques of the Aubusson carpet at every turn.

"Then there will be great popular rejoicings—the Emperor will receive his due—there will be no more misunderstandings. For the Emperor is terribly misunderstood, Mademoiselle, and he is no longer young or strong.... He has so many bitter enemies. . . . I have heard him say so, weeping—the Emperor, Mademoiselle! . . ."

"Oh, hush, Monseigneur!"

But he did not heed Juliette's entreaty.

"I have heard him crying out to God in his room at midnight, when he thought everyone was asleep, and he was quite alone. '*My God! is this the beginning of the punishment? Must the price of my success be ruin, defeat, disgrace!* . . . Then I stole away and made a prayer for him and for myself, Mademoiselle. . . . I say it regularly every night since then."

His boyish pompousness, pride, and vanity had fallen from him like a tinsel diadem. Chivalry and loyalty, unselfishness and devotion shone from and irradiated the child.

"'*My God, if Thou dost save up happiness for me, I pray Thee to take it away, and give it to my father, who needs it so badly. . . . And, my God, if Thou indeed art angry with him, I beseech Thee to grant him Thy pardon, and*

punish me, instead. All I ask Thee for myself is that I may know Thy Will, and obey It, that I may do my duty bravely; and die when the end of my life comes, without dishonour and without fear!' Is that a good prayer, do you think, Mademoiselle ?"

Before she could command herself sufficiently to answer, there was a knock at the door and the equerry came in. He looked eager and vexed, excited and disappointed. Varying emotions seemed to clash in him. But he said, smiling and saluting as the Prince turned towards him:

"The ten minutes are over, Monseigneur !"

"Ten minutes ago, Monsieur, to speak correctly," said Monseigneur, with a mischievous look. Then his face changed. "News !" he called out eagerly. "You have despatches from the Emperor ! . . . Don't play a farce with me, Count, I beg of you ! when there is the telegram sticking out of your cuff !"

And with the nimbleness of a *gamin* and the audacity of a spoiled princeling, he threw himself upon the equerry and captured the prize.

"From the Emperor at Rheims—no ! don't retire, Mademoiselle ! You are discreet—not like women who talk ! . . . You shall share my good news with me. . . . He says: '*There has been furious fighting at Mars la Tour. Battles are raging at Flauville, Flavigny, and Vionville. The Prince will remain for the present at Rethel, where the Emperor will rejoin him on the 27th. As it is not considered advisable to effect a junction with Bazaine, the march of the Army of Châlons is directed upon Sedan.*' "

The mischief died out of the dancing eyes, the mobile face whitened with disappointment. He repeated, staring blankly at the paper:

"For what did we leave Châlons, if not to assist Bazaine ? . . . *Mon Dieu !* . . . What infamy ! . . . Why am I not a man ?"

He grew crimson and burst into a tempest of sobbing. He tore the pale green paper into fragments and trampled them beneath his feet. His eyes blazed through the tears that streamed from them as he stammered between his gasps and chokings:

"Cowards! . . . Traitors! . . . Disgraced for ever! . . . Is there no honour left in France?"

"Come, Mademoiselle, in pity!" entreated the equerry, as deadly pale as Monseigneur was red. He held open the door with a shaking hand, and Juliette hurriedly quitted the drawing-room. The door shut upon the sobs and outcries. The Count said, with a sigh of relief, wiping the perspiration from his face:

"You will not speak of this? His Imperial Highness is overwrought and excited. It will pass, presently. Let me conduct you downstairs!"

The hall of the Prefecture reached, a servant in the livery of the establishment approached the equerry. It appeared that the lady who had accompanied Mademoiselle had recovered from her indisposition, and departed, leaving no message for her young friend.

"Madame will have returned to her hotel," said the equerry. He added, "By chance, Mademoiselle, the despatches we have just received contain proof that your friend has been misled by false intelligence. Colonel de Bayard has not been taken prisoner. He is now in command of his regiment, with the First Brigade of Cavalry of General Clérambault's Division, now engaged with the Third Corps in the neighbourhood of Metz."

Then as Juliette turned red and pale, and looked at him in breathless questioning, he added, pulling a vestibule-chair from its place near the wainscot and making her sit down:

"Rest there one moment. . . . I will speak to Colonel Watrin. He is now at mess with his officers in the Prefect's billiard-room."

Watrin of the Bodyguard, Chief of the Prince Imperial's escort, came clanking and jingling from his dinner to confirm the fact as stated by the equerry. The 777th Chasseurs, belonging to de Clérambault's Division of the Third Corps of the Army of Bazaine, were certainly now engaged in the neighbourhood of Gravelotte. But as certainly they had not come into contact with the enemy previously to the fifteenth of the month.

The fifteenth!—the very day on which Adelaide had baited her trap with an imprisoned father. . . . Joy at the discovery, indignation at having been so easily cajoled into captivity, brought back the red to Juliette's pale cheeks and the light to her sad eyes.

This strange, wayward, mysterious mother might exercise over her daughter a certain degree of maternal authority. The supreme obedience, the first duty was to the father, that was clear. Now she was going straight to him, wherever he might be. She was strong enough for his dear sake, to take whatever risks were involved.

Suppose Adelaide insisted on accompanying her? It was unthinkable that even so hardy an offender should venture into the presence of one so wronged. . . . Meet his look! . . . Read in his face his scorn of perfidy! Juliette put away the possibility from her with both hands.

We know that Madame Adelaide had contemplated this very move upon occasion. But she had not met Mademoiselle de Bayard then. Since the encounter had taken place she had realised that the establishment of maternal influence, strong enough to make of her daughter a confederate and ally, was a task beyond her powers.

Her grace, her charm, were lost upon this pale, frigid, obstinate little being, in whom she saw her mother-in-law over again. For than this girl, sprung of her own flesh, whose veins were filled with her blood, nothing could be

more unlike Adelaide, that magnificent creature of impulses and desires and appetites. . . .

Dominion over de Bayard could never be regained and established while his daughter sat by his hearth a virgin unwed. Why had Adelaide hindered her marriage to M. Tessier ? Pacing the Turkey carpet of the Prefect's library, Madame admitted that she had acted inadvisedly. That the plan of bringing Juliette into contact with the Prince Imperial would be discounted by the innocence of the girl and the inexperience of the boy.

She could imagine the dialogue they were holding at that moment, all, "*Oh, Mademoiselle!*" and "*Ah, Monseigneur!*" . . . The girl should have been permitted to celebrate her nuptials with this dull young husband of her father's choosing. . . . Then a few years later would have come the opportunity. She ground her teeth, thinking how her precipitation had spoiled everything . . . thrust her. . . . Ah, Heaven ! how one shuddered at the recollection, almost into the clutches of the Wielder of the Bowstring, the ingenious inventor of the Ordeal of the Looking-Glass. . . .

Straz. . . . At the sight of him her heart had stopped beating. In imagination those strangling silken folds had closed, shutting out light and breath. . . .

How he had leered, rolling those fierce black eyes of his. "So," his jeering smile had said: "*my Sultana and her slave have met again. Did I not prophesy truly, sweet one, tell me ? when I said you would never again look in your toilette-mirror without remembering me!*"

Her nerves were ravelled to threads—her will was weakening. . . . Despite her hatred and her overwhelming fear of the man, she knew that he was her master. That if he fixed those eyes upon her and beckoned *Come!* she would have to obey. . . .

Was he still here ? The book-lined walls seemed closing

in on her. The atmosphere was suffocating . . . she must escape from this place or go mad.

The Prefect's wife had been called away, after kindly ministrations with smelling-salts and red lavender. Adelaide opened the library door a little way, and looked forth cautiously. Except the two Cent Gardes on duty at the foot of the principal staircase, there was nobody stirring in the hall or vestibule.

As she told herself so, a red baize-covered door at a flagged rear passage-end was opened. The Prince's equerry came out with the Chief of the Bodyguard, an oblong pale green paper was in the equerry's hand. Both officers' faces were pale. Colonel Watrin's was livid and distorted with emotion. He said to his companion in a low voice, and with a despairing gesture:

"It needed but this to hasten the catastrophe ! . . . All is over ! . . . The Empire is lost !"

Then he went back. The red baize door shut upon him. The equerry came through the passage, entered the hall, and went quickly up the stairs. He was going to break to the Emperor's son the news of some terrible disaster . . . to say to him, as Watrin had said: "*All is over ! . . . The Empire is lost !*"

With all a woman's intuition Adelaide leaped at the truth and comprehended the situation. What did she in the galley of a ruined, sinking Empire ? What advantage was to be gained by reconciliation with Henri de Bayard now ? And with Straz in the neighbourhood, what madness to remain here. . . .

As for the girl, she was possessed of money. Let her go to her father, or to her friends, or elsewhere. . . .

So Adelaide went out into the hall, still haunted by horrible memories of the Roumanian. She found the porter. He hailed her *fiacre* from its waiting-place.

Madame stepped in gracefully, and was jingled away, straight into the jaws of Straz !

"Mademoiselle is courageous," commented the Chief of the Escort when Juliette's determination to seek the shelter of her Colonel shaped itself in a request for a military pass, a thing without which nobody could penetrate the immediate area where the dreadful thing called War was actually going on. The speaker resumed:

"The Cavalry Camp of the Third Corps is at present at Châtel St. Germain. . . . Provided Mademoiselle gets there without accident, and can endure the noise of the bombardments—Mademoiselle may be quite as safe"—he shrugged and twirled his imperial—"there as anywhere else ! . . ."

A little vague, more than a little doubtful, considering the huge conflict then waging, that was to wage until nightfall of the morrow, between the Imperial Army of Metz and the First and Second Armies of Germany. But the permit was written and signed with a flourish, and gracefully handed over to the keeping of Mademoiselle. Then she thanked Colonel Watrin and went away, declining the attendance of the servant whom the officer would have sent with her, and descended the steps of the Prefecture under the raking eyes of the crowd. . . .

For, owing to a mysterious leakage in Imperial despatches something approaching to a panic was brewing. . . . The Place of the Prefecture was packed with people . . . the news of the frightful struggle near Metz was buzzing from mouth to mouth. It was whispered that defeat was certain, that M. de Bismarck had a secret understanding with M. de Bazaine. . . . Later on, when peasants who had hurried in from villages on the outskirts, stragglers who had quitted the Army at the commencement of its misfortunes, soldiers who had deserted from the Colours in action, came

flocking into the town; despite the presence of the Body-guard and the gendarmerie, and the local Fire-Brigade, an attack upon the Imperial party at the Prefecture was anticipated; so threatening became the attitude of the people, egged on by those among them who were agents and spies of the enemy.

Perhaps the arrival of the Emperor would throw oil upon the troubled waters. Perhaps it would be wiser to warn him not to come. Well might the officers who guarded the person of the Heir of a crumbling Empire, groan under the burden of their responsibilities. Well might the Prefect perspire, to the ruin of his collars and cravats.

It may be imagined that the lack of Adelaide's company did not greatly depress Mademoiselle de Bayard, as, cheered by her interview and armed with her permit, she tripped through the crowded streets to the Hotel of the Crown, where they had spent the previous night.

"Madame had already returned," said the respectable Frenchwoman in charge of the bureau. "She gave notice of departure and asked for the account. Then the gentleman arrived,—a handsome man with splendid eyes, brilliant as carbuncles, and hair and beard—my faith! what hair and what a beard! Madame cried out with ravishment upon his entrance, for he would not be announced,—he went up at once. Possibly it was Madame's husband, or some near relative?"

Juliette made some ambiguous reply to the question. She was intent upon the problem of rescuing her travelling-bag. Without money one could not reach Châtel St. Germain, and in the bag was her little store of cash. Trembling she crept upstairs to the room she had slept in, a dressing or maid's apartment, opening out of Madame's. The discovery that the door was locked and the key in Adelaide's possession was appalling. She was de-

livered from the dilemma by a chambermaid with a master-key. As she stole in and seized her bag, she heard voices in the next room. Certainly one was Adelaide's and the other male. A thickish voice, speaking with a drawl and a muffled softness that somehow recalled the Assyrian hawk-features and fierce black eyes of Straz.

"*When the little Queen of Diamonds comes,*" the voice said, "*you shall present me!*" And a chuckle followed on the words that made her cold. Fortunately some noise in the corridor covered her retreat with her rescued property, and facilitated her departure unobserved, from the Hotel of the Crown. . . .

The station was near enough to be reached in a few minutes. She learned there that a train would leave in ten minutes for Verdun. At Verdun she would have to change, provided the branch-line trains were running, or proceed to Châtel St. Germain by road.

Those ten minutes expanded into hours as the girl sat in the dirty station, waiting. She was escaping from even greater perils than she had feared, and yet when she found herself actually in the train, and the train moving out of Rethel, she knew a moment of passionate regret.

She had been so happy there. . . . She would never forget, even though she lived to be an old, old woman, that half-hour spent in easy, confidential talk with her Imperial Prince.

The littered third-class carriage expanded, became the formal drawing-room of the Prefecture. . . . Lingeringly Mademoiselle went over the interview, and the parting—ah me! there had been no farewell! . . . And yet, upon the step of departure, standing upon the muddy kerbstone of the Place, full of soldiers and scowling people, she had looked wistfully up at the row of four big round-

topped shining windows on the balconied first-floor of the Prefecture and seen. . . .

Only a boy's face, blurred and stained with crying. Only a boy's hand, waved behind the pane. As she whispered, "*Adieu!*" looking up at him with passionate love and loyalty, she wondered if ever they two would meet on earth again?

It was to be never again for the boy and girl, whose chivalrous and noble natures had struck out, at first meeting, the white spark that kindles to Friendship's sacred flame.

What misfortunes were coming, thick and fast, upon the luckless child of the Empire. . . . What a cup of dreadful judgment was to be offered to those guiltless lips. . . .

So young, so noble, so unfortunate! The pity of it! . . . He who might have breathed new life into the dry bones of the Napoleonic Legend, and given France an Emperor without fear and without reproach.

What a string of waking nightmares, the days that were to follow. . . . That journey by road to Mézières . . . that brief sojourn at Sedan. The sudden flight to Avesnes, where the guns could be heard thundering, betokening the defeat of a demoralised, dejected army, conquered almost before the shock of battle, paralysed by the premonition of inevitable disaster, as much as by the perfect preparedness, the masterly strategy, and the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. . . .

From Landrécies to Maubeuge follow the boy sorrowfully. . . .

What an hour was that when his protectors stripped him of his darling uniform, dressed him in civilian garments, took him out by the hotel back-door, and smuggled him into the omnibus that was to convey him to Belgian ground.

His father a prisoner, his mother a fugitive, crowds hustling him in their curiosity to see the son of the toppled Napoleon, what wonder that the memory of that journey haunted him his brief life long.

He was to attain manhood in exile. Transplanted to the soil of a foreign country, he was to develop into the *beau-ideal* of a youthful King among men. High-minded, pure-hearted, excelling in manly sports and martial exercises, the soul of honour, the fine flower of French chivalry. And in the spring of his manhood he was to die by the assegais of savage warriors, leaving nothing behind him but the broken heart of a mother, some fragrant memories, and the undying story of that lion's life-and-death fight among the trodden grasses on the banks of the Imbazani.

LVIII.

Following the devious route of narrow paths by which the peasant had guided them, P. C. Breagh made his way back to the battle-ground between the Bois de Vionville and the Bois de Gaumont.

Prussian spade-parties had made good progress during the three hours of his absence. Part of the field had been cleared, long parallel trenches dug at twelve-foot intervals in the soft, soaked ground, and German bodies decently interred therein. Huge canvas sacks crammed with identification-tags, papers and purses removed from these stood ready to be carted away. Volunteers and Red Cross helpers had rendered like services to dead Frenchmen. And at the head of a trench, marked by a board on which was chalked in awkward letters:

"CHASSEURS OF HORSE OF THE IMPERIAL GUARD.
OFFICERS, 6.
TROOPS, 200,"

a single widish grave had been dug, in which had been deposited the body of de Bayard.

The place was marked by a Cross made of the broken halves of a Uhlan lance lashed with a fragment of cavalry picket-rope. About the cross Mademoiselle de Bayard's veil had been loosely tied, and the vertical shaft topped, grimly enough, with M. le Colonel's talpack. None of the heavy clay soil had been thrown back. Waiting some hand to draw Earth's rude coverlet charitably over him, de Bayard lay, staring back in the brazen face of the sun.

His green silver-braided dolman had been torn open—the blood-drenched *ceinture* cut, showing the mortal lance-thrust. The red, silver-striped pantaloons had been slashed at the hips, no doubt in search of pocket-book and purse. It was difficult to credit that the sternly-extended right arm, and the determined frown graven deep between the eyebrows, did not mean that Life was extinct, but merely in abeyance;—that the cold glitter of the bold dark eyes and the grim setting of the pale mouth under the martial moustache would not warm and soften and relax into a smile. . . .

He was so disdainful in his rigid silence, so much a chief of men, even in death, that the dishevelled scallawag who dared to love his daughter, winced at the cold stare of those dark, glittering eyes. But for Juliette's sake P. C. Breagh nerved himself to the sticking-point—got down into the squashy clay beside de Bayard, and took his medals, and Cross of the Legion of Honour, giving him Juliette's Rosary instead.

"You know, sir, I don't intend to take a liberty," he felt like saying: "I'm only carrying out what I've given my word to do. If I'm not quite up to your mark, please overlook it! As to being worthy of *her—is* any man breathing? Ask yourself the question, and the answer will be No. . . ."

Save the Algerian, Crimean and Sardinian medals, and the Cross, nothing of value remained upon the Colonel.

Some soldier having left a spade sticking in the clay at the head of an unfinished trench, P. C. Breagh possessed himself of the utensil, and began to fill the grave in, though the dead face looked at him so haughtily that until he had covered it with the black silk veil, he boggled hideously at the task.

Winking away the tears that blinded him, and gulping down the lump that stuck in his throat, he finished. Remained but the need of a Catholic priest to read the Office. You saw the caped cloak, and the broad-brimmed hat, or the cassock and biretta of the Roman ecclesiastic, working side by side with the Jewish rabbi, the English Protestant clergyman, and the Lutheran pastor, in these harvest-fields of death. The secular priest and the tonsured religious were to be found with the Red Cross Ambulance-trains and in the temporary hospitals; doing their best for the souls and bodies of their broken fellow-men, now that War had done the worst.

To whom should one appeal? Hardly to the burly, bearded Franciscan, who passed supporting a laden double-stretcher at the upper end. You saw his brown robe hitched up under his white girdle, and his muscular bare legs, ending in boots of the elastic-sided description, stained as though he had been treading out ripe grapes in the press. An Army chaplain succeeded the monk, upright and thin, in a dark military frock and black-banded forage-cap, half leading, half carrying a French corporal of infantry, who had received a bullet through both eyes. Farther off, a gray-haired ecclesiastic, whose dress betokened his episcopal dignity, was administering the Viaticum to a dying Mecklenburg Hussar. Even as the sublime Mystery of Faith was uplifted—even as the Englishman bent the knee in adoration, his glance fell

upon the kneeling figure of an old man a few yards away.

Undoubtedly a priest, the poor shepherd of some poverty-stricken country parish, for the cassock that covered the frail, wasted body was threadbare, green with wear and heavily patched. Absorbed in devotion, his broad-brimmed hat lying on the ground before him, his thin hands crossed upon his sunken breast, his white head erect, his rapt gaze fixed upon the Host, he remained immovable, until the brief but solemn rite was at an end. Then he looked up at the sky—shaking back the long white hair that had fallen about his peaked and meagre features,—making three times rapidly the sign of the Cross. And the serene and beautiful peace that rested on that broad furrowed forehead, the radiant smile upon the toothless mouth, and the beaming kindliness in the brilliant dark eyes that rested on P. C. Breagh's, told him that here was the needed man.

Yet he hesitated to speak to the priest, who rose and moved a few steps farther to where a shell-torn horse, tangled in the rope-harness that had attached to it a smashed artillery caisson, lay groaning and thrashing its long neck and tortured head to and fro.

Parties of Uhlans told off for the purpose, were even then shooting such hopelessly-wounded victims. But no merciful bullet had ended the pain of this suffering beast. It groaned again, and coughed up blood as the old man stopped to look at it, and fixed its haggard eyes almost humanly upon his face.

The appeal went home. Stepping over the prone body of its dead comrade, the old man bent over the horse and gently stroked its neck. He said, and the words came clearly to Carolan:

"Poor creature of God! be thy sore anguish ended. In the Name of the Father . . ."

As he ended the Triune Invocation, the horse's head sank down heavily. A deep sigh heaved the creature's lean sides, and exhaled in a gasp. The hind-legs contracted sharply towards the body, and then jerked out, heavily hitting the axle of the ammunition-cart. All was over. The Samaritan moved away, but P. C. Breagh followed and overtook him, crying:

"My Father . . ." And the old man halted and turned himself, leaning for support upon a knotted ash-stick and saying:

"Surely, my child. Do you need my poor assistance?"

A lisping voice, speaking with a country accent. And with that smile of radiant kindness making it angelic—the face of Voltaire.

There were the features of the Philosopher of Ferney, rendered familiar to this later age by many portraits and busts. The broad and lofty brow, the great orbital arches, the mobile expressive eyes, wide-winged, sensitive hawk-beak, thin-lipped mouth, with the subtly-curving corners and the deeply-cleft humorous chin, were all there. The face lacked nothing of Voltaire but cynicism and devilry. In place of these, imagine a Divine simplicity, and a tenderness so pure that the young man was abashed. . . .

"My Father," he got out: "in charity to the dead and pity for the living, will you consent to read the Office of Burial by a Catholic soldier's graveside?"

"Surely, surely, my child," nodded the wearer of the threadbare soutane. And pulled out of his pocket a red-cotton handkerchief, wrapped about a battered Office-book and a shabby stole, and trotted back beside the Englishman. Then, standing opposite to where the green and red-plumed talpack topped the broken lance-shaft, he read the Absolution, the *Libera me, Paternoster* and Collects, and with a wide and sweeping gesture, solemnly blessed the grave and the trenches it neighboured, saying, at the close

of the *De Profundis* that followed, with one of those rare smiles that made the old face beautiful exceedingly:

"My poor prayers are for all my children. Now kneel and make your confession. No one will hear you—it is as though we were together in my poor little church!"

"But, my Father! . . ." P. C. Breagh protested.

The old man said, looking at him penetratingly:

"My child, you would tell me that not so very long ago you discharged your religious obligations. But to-day is the Octave of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady, and you have not confessed or received Communion since Whitsuntide. Will you tell me that your conscience is clear enough to meet death without apprehension, when Saints at the moment of dissolution tremble, anticipating the terrors of the Divine Judgments of God!"

Tears stood in the radiant eyes, brimmed over and ran down in two channels worn by that sorrowful-sweet smile of his. . . . He clasped his hands entreatingly, then threw them wide, crying in a very passion of pity and love:

"My poor child, with Death on every side of you, will you turn from Him Who is Lord and Giver of Life? And what shall I say to Him when I stand before Him, and He asks me: '*Didst thou suffer a sinner to depart whom pleadings might have won?*'"

There was no resisting that passionate entreaty. Another instant, and the barrier of pride broke down. P. C. Breagh knelt in the raw, moist clay by Henri de Bayard's graveside, and poured out his full heart under the light yet thrilling pressure of those thin old hands upon his head.

With the murmured blessing that followed the Absolution the hands were withdrawn and their owner departed. How he went and whither he betook himself, his penitent never knew.

LIX.

The hamlet of Petit Plappeville lay strangely still and silent in the westering sunshine. Hitherto a small oasis of untouched ordinary life situated on the edge of a vast area of blackened devastation, it now partook in the general aspect of upheaval and ruin. The doors of the dozen cottages forming its single street stood wide open. Household goods, furniture, clothing, broken loaves of bread, smashed and empty wine-bottles were strewed upon the street and in the little, flowery front yards. All the doors stood open, some that had been locked and driven in hung crookedly on twisted hinges, the broken windows displayed shattered splinters edging gaping holes. Not a human being showed, not a fowl pecked among the litter. The hand of the marauder had plainly been at work. P. C. Breagh groaned as he crossed the threshold of Madame Guyot's cottage, such a scene of domestic chaos housed between its defiled walls.

Chests of drawers and cupboards had been ransacked of clothes and linen, these, hideously befouled, had been rent into rags and thrown upon the floor. The fragments of the Englishman's knapsack, temporarily left in Madame Guyot's keeping, the ruins of his shaving-tackle, and some stray leaves of filled note-books, deplorably appealed to their late owner's eyes. But P. C. Breagh's eyes were busied elsewhere. With the ripped-up feather bed from the inner chamber, where Juliette de Bayard had passed the previous night. With the soiled and trampled remnants of some delicate articles of feminine underwear—a lace-frilled night-robe, a filmy chemise. He took them up with reverent, shaking hands—looked instinctively for an initial. . . . There were letters embroidered in dainty Convent-taught stitchery—"J. M. de B."

He would have cried out, but the cry stuck in his throat, and a chilly sweat broke out upon and bathed him. He had glanced toward the corner occupied by the truckle-bed whereon my Cousin Boisset had lain. Covered with a sheet dyed partly red, something long and stark and still lay outstretched upon the palliasse. And a lance driven home to the shaft stuck upright in the body, from whose drained-out veins the last drops splashed heavily into a dreadful pool that slowly widened on the stone-flagged kitchen floor.

Something snapped in P. C. Breagh's brain at that sight. His under-jaw wrenched to one side and dropped idiotically. He yelped out wildly the name of his Infanta, and went on yelping, and could not stop:

"Juliette! Juliette! Where are you? What have they done? . . . Oh, Juliette! . . ."

And then the piercing agony of his loss and the certainty of a fate of nameless horror for her, were lost in an immense relief. Underneath the bed of death something moved and rustled. The slender thread of a voice replied:

"Monsieur Breagh, I am here! Do not be so alarmed, I beg of you! Terrible things have happened, but I am not hurt at all!"

And the ensanguined pall was pushed aside and the little figure crept out from its hiding-place. Dust and cobwebs could not dim her in the eyes of her true worshipper. He choked and made a dive to help her, stumbled and fell upon his knees as she rose to hers. And then she was in his arms, not clinging to him, but leaning against his broad chest, and shivering as though she were perishing cold. And through the chattering of her teeth he heard—did he really hear her falter:

"I knew—I knew that you would come! When a priest had been found to bless the grave of my father. Not before! . . . You would never have returned before!"

Her faith in him filled him with a joy that was anguish.

He rose up, lifting her towards the light, but not at all releasing her.

"I came as soon as I had done my best to keep that promise. Shall I ever forget what I felt when I set my foot in at the door? . . . Oh, Lord! . . . Ten million times worse than when that luckless Angéle poisoned me! . . . Didn't I make sure you were dead or worse than dead!"

"It is he who is dead!" She drew her small, cold hands from his that were as icy, and went to the bed and turned back the upper end of the sheet that covered the still form. "Monsieur Breagh, you look upon a noble soldier, who gave his life for me," she said proudly, and showed the snow-white face of my Cousin Boisset.

"Wouldn't I die for you? If I got the chance! . . . Don't you know it? . . . No—how can you know it?" Carolan clenched his hands in jealous misery, and she looked back at him to say:

"I do know it! To-day you placed yourself between me and the violence of those Prussians. I have no words to thank you for your courage, sir! Had I words for *him*" she looked back at my "cousin," "he would not hear them. . . . Nor can he be sensible of this——" She stooped and kissed the dead man's forehead between the boldly arching eyebrows. "Yet with all my gratitude I place it there!"

P. C. Breagh said, flushing scarlet to his hair-roots: "I would change places with him to get that—and I believe you know it! Cover him up and let me take you away from here. . . ." He added, as she looked at him in breathless questioning, "Somewhere where you'll be safe. There must be somewhere!"

"Until night comes to cover us," she told him, "we are more safe here than anywhere. You do not think the comrades of those savage men who made this scene of

desolation, would halt in passing to ravage a plundered nest ?"

" But here . . . you can't stay here . . . in all this—beastliness !"

His gesture of repugnance was as forcible as the word.

She thought, and said as the outward shadows lengthened, and a deep red sunset streamed through the shattered window-panes:

" Behind the house there is a little *cabane* . . . I should say, ' a shed,' where Madame kept her firewood. We will hide ourselves in there until the dark. For what are you looking ?"

He answered, stirring the *débris* on the flagstones:

" For a comb and a razor for choice, out of my knapsack. No ! . . . Except the rags of a spare jacket—they've left me nothing but this."

One stout clasped notebook had suffered little. He thrust it into his pocket and turned to Juliette. She said, with a rueful catch of the breath as she regarded the wreckage of her own property:

" Me they have not left anything at all of luggage. The *sac de nuit* I brought with me from Belgium . . . behold its contents destroyed by those most wicked men ! Oh, how fortunate that my money was in my pocket ! Yet what ruin most deplorable ! Pray regard, Monsieur !"

But Monsieur, suddenly seized by an attack of ultra-British prudery, had turned away to rummage in the corner of a cupboard, where perchance might lurk a loaf.

Nothing was there but a little knitted white shawl, which Mademoiselle recognised as her own, and claimed gladly. . . . She threw it about her head and shoulders, and they passed out cautiously together by Madame Guyot's back-door, as destitute a young couple as ever tramped. But not before Juliette Bayard had replaced the sheet over the

face of the dead gunner, and sprinkled it with holy water from a crockery stoup that hung above the bed.

"He was so good. . . . He should now be safe in Paradise. But we must always remember him in our prayers! . . ."

It would not have been wise to move about, but they could talk in whispers, partly buried in the heap of clean dry, dead leaves filling half of the lean-to. Thus P. C. Breagh learned the story of the death of my Cousin Boisset, and told in return his own tale.

"You had departed," said Juliette, "it might be one half-hour, when a man came running down the street, who cried: 'Hide! Run! The Uhlans are coming! They have plundered the Château Malakoff, and drunk M. Benoit's *eau de vie* and wine!'

"This Château Malakoff is the house of a rich peasant whose vineyards have suffered much by the German guns. You will remember Madame Guyot saying so, and M. Boisset responding, full of gaiety, 'He will get all the better prices, my cousin, for the old vintages he has in store!' Naturally the outcry made much confusion, one peasant running this way and one that. . . . Madame Guyot caught hold of me and would have forced me to accompany her, saying that in the quarries beyond the village would be found a refuge. But I refused to leave the house!"

Breagh broke in:

"Think what you risked! Why didn't you escape with her?"

She looked at him wonderingly:

"Why, do you ask me? . . . Had I not given you my *parole* to stay?"

He could not speak. She went on quickly:

"So I said: 'I will remain, wearing my *brassard* of the

Croix Rouge, and the Prussians will take me for the nurse of M. Boisset.' But when Madame and the villagers had gone, hearing the galloping of horses approaching and a howling as of wolves, that brave soldier said to me: ' Mademoiselle, when men like these are mad with wine, they care nothing for the Red Cross ! Cover me over with a sheet, and hide underneath the bed I lie on. Thus they will think me dead, and possibly go away. The good God may let me save you, though I have often sinned against Him !' "

A tear brimmed over and fell on her white cheek. She brushed it off and went on:

" I obeyed, Monsieur; I locked the door, taking out the key and hiding it. Then I covered M. Boisset with the sheet, took a crucifix from the wall, and laid it on his breast. Then I got under the bed, for I heard men at the door. There was the ' tinc ' of spurs and the sound of breathing. Then heavy blows struck on the door until the lock gave way. . . . They entered. . . . Monsieur Breagh, that noble man had said to me, ' *For your life, do not make a sound !*' For my soul, more precious than life, I could not have spoken or moved ! . . ."

Above the narrow band of black velvet that clipped it, P. C. Breagh could see her little throat swelling. Her tragic eyes seemed to have no room for him. He waited, possessed by a strange hazy feeling that this meeting with her amidst surroundings so frightful must be taking place in a dream of uncanny vividness. That he must wake up next moment in the clean spare bedroom of the gardener's cottage, to find his garments, cleansed of soil and stain, brushed and repaired by the deft hands of the charitable Sisters, and a battered tin bath of genuinely hot water, waiting to receive the Englishman. . . .

" They came in," said Juliette, " talking in their guttural language. Me, I could never learn more than ten words of German at School. . . . But I comprehended

that they were angry at finding so little in the cupboards and closets of my poor Madame Guyot. That was why they tore up clothes and linen—broke the dishes and glasses—behaved as wild beasts, rather than men. That they were drunk, I knew, though I saw their boots and not their faces. The smell of wine and brandy made me desire to be sick. . . . But when they approached the bed, with what anguish of apprehension I waited! . . . If I could have screamed, it would have been in that moment, when they pulled back the sheet! . . ."

Her eyelids shuddered over the fixed eyeballs. Her nostrils quivered with each sharply-taken breath. Her tragic upper lip shut down upon its neighbour as though it would never relax in smiles again:

"I heard my own heart beat—so loud it was like thunder. I felt M. Boisset trying to hold the breath. . . . I prayed to the Mother of God to cover us with Her *manteau*. I think She has certainly heard me when the Uhlans put back the sheet. . . . Alas! how terribly I am to find myself mistaken. When the Uhlan moves from the bed, I believe he is about to go. Then—there is a savage cry! —a groan, hollow and terrible! . . . The lance comes plunging through the body of M. Boisset, through the palliasse—through the sacking that is underneath—through the sleeve of my dress, which is soaked with blood. . . . See! . . ."

And she drew out a fold of the loose sleeve, and showed the rent made by the steel in it and the wet red patches fast drying into brownish stains. And he who saw could only choke out, as his brows scowled and his yellow-flecked eyes burned tigerishly:

"The brutes! . . . The cowardly beggars! Oh, if I had only been there!"

"Of what use?" she said. "They would only have killed you!"

"An Englishman," he blustered: "I'd like to have had them try! Why, we're neutral. No Germans would dare——"

She said, bending her great black brows upon him, and sternly drawing down her upper-lip:

"Monsieur, they would have killed you, as they killed my father. They have no pity, these men with panther hearts. How should they, when *he* has none—that soldier-Minister whom Germany worships to idolatry? Contradict me—say that I am wrong—to convince me would be impossible! For I read the soul of Count Bismarck when I looked him in the face!"

For the owner of the domineering voice that had roused her from her stupor of misery was for Juliette Bayard a very Moloch, ravenous for flesh of men, insatiable in thirst for blood. And comprehending this, P. C. Breagh put forth no plea for a more tolerant judgment of his erstwhile hero, beyond lamely saying:

"He's a great man—a terribly great man, however you look at him! And—do you know, he saved my life once!"

She said, with her deeply-cut nostrils swelling and quivering:

"Our Lord will say to him upon the Day of Judgment, 'You saved this one! How many others have you given to death?'"

Then, as P. C. Breagh winced at the brief, semi-contemptuous 'This one,' Juliette healed the wound with one gentle glance. The delicate voice crept to his sore heart soothingly:

"But for that rescue, I should now be quite alone in my great misery. I think that God permitted it, knowing this day upon its way to me."

P. C. Breagh said, tingling all over:

"Do you really believe that? . . ."

She answered simply and directly:

"If I did not, I would not say it. . . . Now I will shut my eyes and rest a little. I am so very tired, me!"

And she leaned back with lowered lashes on her rustling pillow of last year's dead leaves. He asked himself what had she not gone through on this day, poor fragile, tender child!

Had the news of her father's death been brought to her in London or Paris, there would have been closed doors, a darkened chamber for the mourner, the presence of some well-loved consoler, the counsel of her director, the silent sympathy of understanding friends.

But here, where every custom and conventionality was suspended or shattered—where human life was bared to the bedrock by the furious struggle of nations in War, she had sought for a wounded warrior, to find a bloody corpse amidst a jumble of other corpses, and returned from that overwhelming experience to sit with strangers at a peasant's board.

No wonder Juliette was very tired. Would her reason suffer from the results of this shock? Would she droop and die of the horrors undergone? Was it possible that in a body so frail there dwelt an indomitable and unconquerable spirit? It had looked out of her stern eyes, it had sat upon her lips when she had spoken of the Iron Chancellor.

Even as P. C. Breagh leaned towards the small white face, brooding over it, breathlessly studying it, she opened sapphire eyes upon him, to say, with the suddenness of a child:

"I have been told that the Crown Prince of Prussia is good and has a noble nature. Do you not think that if he knew how wickedly those Uhlans have killed the poor M. Boisset, he would without mercy have them shot?"

P. C. Breagh, caught staring, confusedly opined so. She said, her heavy eyelids weighed down with weariness:

"They were cowards, for they took the alarm and mounted and rode away, calling that the *Franzosischen* were coming. . . . Yet when they had gone and I crept out from my concealment, what do you imagine is all that I view ? In effect, nothing more terrible than an old, bent, white-haired priest in a ragged soutane, who was walking through the village saying his Rosary. . . ."

She went on, as P. C. Breagh pricked his ears, and opened his eyes widely:

" He looked so good and like the pictures of the holy Curé d'Ars, for whose intercession I had been praying, that I cried to him: 'Help, my Father ! Help for one dying ! Help for another in misery !' But he must have been less holy than he looked, or very deaf, for he passed on. Then I crept back under the bed, and then—at last, you came to me ! What should I have done if you had not come, Monsieur ? . . ."

For once Carolan did not hear her. His thoughts were busy elsewhere. He was asking himself if the old priest in the patched cassock, who had shown himself to Juliette, could be the Curé who had read the Office at the grave of de Bayard ?

And if that priest were mortal man, how had he covered the distance between the battle-field and Petit Plappeville, and what had scared the drunken marauders from their prey ? And was it not strange that the resemblance to the saint of Ars had appealed to both Carolan and Juliette ? . . . The problem must remain unsolved for all Time, it might be.

Yet this fact had stamped itself on P. C. Breagh's consciousness, deeply as his own heavy nailed boots had bitten into the clay by the Colonel's graveside. On the moist surface of the spot where the Servant of Heaven had been standing, the clumsy iron-buckled, wooden-soled shoes had left no print at all.

An interesting illusion, bred of the exaltation of the senses under emotion, produced in part, says my friend the Physiologist, by subconscious Memory. A significant phenomenon, remarks my other friend, the student of Psychology, testifying to the thinness of the Veil dividing the Visible World from the Unseen. While my Catholic terms it a rare, but not isolated or uncommon revelation, pointing the stupendous truth contained in that clause of the *Credo* referring to the Communion of Saints, and illustrating the dynamic force of Prayer.

LX.

JULIETTE breathed so evenly, and lay so long without moving, that P. C. Breagh believed her asleep. Twilight showed nothing but a black shape, vaguely feminine, a pale oval patch represented her face. . . .

Suddenly as before, her eyes opened and met his. She said, following up some previous train of thought:

"It is nobler than the portraits, and yet more pitiless. I speak of the face of my country's enemy. . . . See you well, Monsieur Breagh . . . if I were Our Lady, I would never rise from my knees until Our Lord had saved France! . . ."

"What would save France?" Carolan asked her. She answered, turning in her rustling couch of leaves:

"Death, striking the hand that slowly strangles her. . . . Death, freezing the brain that plans her fall. . . . Death, overtaking the merciless giver of Death to her children. . . . Nothing else could now save France! . . ."

He who heard was dumb, knowing that this harping was the very note of madness. She went on, speaking with sombre earnestness:

"Always is it that women are accused by men of weak-

ness. Frenchwomen are, in addition, termed 'timid and frivolous.' Yet France has twice been saved by the courage of her daughters. . . . Remember the holy Jeanne d'Arc, beloved of God and Our Lady . . . and Charlotte Corday also, Monsieur!—the courageous citizeness of Caën. . . . At school I learned her words, spoken before the Revolutionary Tribunal. . . . '*Me, I have slain one man to save a hundred thousand!* . . .' Why has not France a Charlotte Corday now?"

There was something in her tone that menaced like the flicker of lightning, seen through a rent in stormy wrack. That a creature so frail and slender should dream of heroic vengeance was incredible. One would have expected it from a heroine of the Krimhilde-Brünhilde type. To divert her from the dangerous theme by changing the conversation was impossible. The only thing to do was to feign to doze.

He yawned, stretched his aching body on the clean dry litter, shut his hot and sandy eyes, seeing rings of green-blue fire. Oblivion descended on him. Pretence became reality. He sank into a very gulf of sleep.

Long after her comrade's heavy respiration had told her that he was wrapped in slumber, Juliette Bayard sat staring out into the deepening dusk. Insomnia born of nervous strain and mental shock, claimed her as a victim. She was far more near to madness than Carolan had dreamed.

It was a night of chilly breathings from the north-west, and violent contrasts in light and shadow; a high bright moon making black silhouettes of hills and trees, and bottomless infernos of hollows and ravines. Gigantesque clouds up-piled monstrous ramparts on the south-east horizon, others topped these with the strangest sculpturesque shapes. . . . An iceberg with a veiled crouching figure on it; a mammoth with elevated trunk and great curved

tusks, bellowing in dumb show; wrestling shapes of Titans prone or erect; lovely children playing in meadows of asphodel; vast winged shapes of genii with hidden faces, speeding across unthinkable distances of cold, crystal-blue atmosphere. . . .

But the cloud-shape that most persistently recurred was that of a heavy-browed, moustached Colossus, who sometimes was helmed and cuirassed, and bestrode a monstrous horse of war. In other vaporous pictures he addressed great multitudes from a high rostrum, or from some fantastic hill-peak urged on rushing armies; or sometimes counselled a crowned figure that sat upon a high-placed throne.

Yet wherever the giant was, there was sure to be another figure, slender, weak, fragile, a mere vaporous wisp of mist. And the watcher had strange cognizance that this was the appointed Fate of Colossus, and that her constant presence was an augury of ill for him.

He walked amidst trees in a wood, and his Fate dogged his footsteps, a pistol or poignard ready for her country's enemy. . . . He ate at a daïs-table in a banqueting-hall,—she served him a golden cup of wine iced and poisoned. . . . He lay down to sleep on a lordly bed, the frail shape glided in with a torch and fired the curtains. . . . He dreamed of Power on the brink of a precipice, and his tiny Fate crept near unseen, and thrust him screaming down.

The moon had long southed, the cloud-shapes were growing vaguer, the eyes of the stars looked through their thinning veils. The wind had fallen, the silence was profound and awful. She shuddered, thinking of the battle-field. . . .

What of de Bayard laying under his clay coverlet? What of the thousands of bodies buried in the newly-dug trenches? What of the myriads yet unburied, lying stark and awful under the canopy of Night?

Did they understand, the Dead, whose hand had really poured red life from them, and thrown them like empty, broken vessels abroad upon the trodden fields ? Did they curse him with their stiff, silent lips, and point at him with their rigid fingers ? Would they know, in Paradise or Purgatory, if anyone avenged them? In Hell they would be sure to know, because their murderer would be there. . . .

"*Ting*. . . ."

What was that faint approaching sound, drawing nearer and nearer through the darkness, that banished the haunting, dreadful images that crowded in her brain ? It loosed the iron band that was bound about her aching temples. It melted the icy armour that was riveted about her torn and sorrowful heart. . . .

"*Ting-ting !*"

She turned her head to the quarter whence it came, and listened, breathing quickly. Again came the silvern tinkle.

"*Ting-ting-ting !* . . ."

Now the sound of heavy approaching footsteps came with it, and Fear fell from her like a pall all snow-wet. She rose up among the rustling dead leaves, bent, laid her hand on the shoulder of the sleeper, and roused him cautiously. He awakened, and said through the fingers she laid in caution on his lips:

"Who is it ? . . ." And then instantly remembered, and passionately kissed the warning hand.

"*Ting-ting, ting-ting !* . . ."

"Do you hear, Monsieur ?" she panted.

She snatched away the hand. He rose to his knees, and listened. . . . Dawn, creeping into the hovel, painted their hands and faces gray. White teeth flashed in the gray of his, as he said to her joyfully:

"It is a priest, with the Blessed Sacrament !"

No more was said. They took hands and went out of

the hovel, and passed round and through the little flowery front yard into the littered street of Petit Plappeville.

At its upper end two black figures, encircled by the yellow halo of a lantern-flame, moved towards them. Their shadows were thrown sidewise upon the littered road and the whitewashed garden-walls. The bell tinkled, telling of the coming of Him Who is the Light of the world. The wheezing of someone troubled with asthma accompanied the clumping of wooden-soled country shoes.

Presently came in sight an old woman in sabots, carrying an immense umbrella, and a huge and antique lantern with horn slides. The stout figure of an elderly priest followed her, covered with a biretta, wearing a wide black mantle, and walking at a slow and decent pace.

At intervals he tinkled the small hand-bell he carried in his left hand. His right arm was folded over his breast. As Juliette sank down in the dry dust, her companion hesitated an instant, then knelt down, beside the girl.

The priest stopped as he neared the kneeling pair, and blessed them in silence. His round face looked puckered and anxious. He said, as his glance took in the bare-headed young man and the slender young woman, and their environment of ruin and desolation:

"My children, are you the only living creatures remaining in this unhappy village ?"

Juliette was praying. P. C. Breagh answered in a reverent whisper:

"Yes, my Father. The Prussian horsemen came, and the villagers left their houses. . . . There was a wounded soldier in the cottage of Madame Guyot. He feigned to be dead, and the Uhlans ran him through with one of their lances. He lies within there ! May his soul rest in peace !"

The priest solemnly raised the Host, and blessed the house of death. Then he said to Carolan and Juliette:

"It will be best that you should follow me to the place

where I am going. A person lies there in extremity, to whom I carry Our Lord. Your presence will be something of an additional protection, in case any of these foreign soldiers should offer insult to Him I bear."

He rang the bell, and moved on along the street that was cumbered with the wreckage of humble households. The old woman in sabots preceded him, assiduously lighting his path. And the boy and girl came after the priest, walking side by side decorously. But presently, when Juliette stumbled, Carolan took her hand.

"*Ting!*"

They might have been walking to the Sepulchre on that earliest Easter morning, when He Who wrought man in His Own Image broke asunder the bonds of Death. The air was sweet with a wonderful reviving fragrance. Their pulses throbbed calmly, their blood flowed through their veins smoothly as new milk. Presently the old woman who walked before them began in a monotone to recite the Rosary. They answered, murmuring the sacred words in unison, moving on as though in a dream.

Over the smouldering villages in the south-east the August moon was setting, hanging like a great ripe glowing fruit against a background of translucent silvery blue. A broad band of primrose-yellow banding the purple blackness in the East betokened daybreak. Above, there hung one star of blazing emerald.

When they turned out of Petit Plappeville into a lane that trended upwards, they could see upon the right the long lines of Prussian watch-fires twinkling like rubies out of a mist that covered the low-lying country like a shallow, milky sea. Upon the left rose the ivied stone wall of some orchard or château garden. Steps rose to an archway in which hung the fragments of a door that had been battered in.

"*Ting!*"

As the priest rang his bell a bare-headed man appeared in the doorway. He was very pale, his dress was disordered, and his eyes had a strained and anxious look. He bent the knee and crossed himself, then stood aside as the Curé mounted the doorsteps. His wild eyes questioned the faces of the strangers who followed the lantern-bearer. He seemed reassured by what he saw there, and said to the priest in a muffled tone, loud enough to be heard by his companions:

"Take care . . . there is broken glass strewed everywhere about here. Do not put out the lantern, it will be safer walking with more than one light!"

Then he took up a heavy silver candlestick he had set down upon a sort of rustic flower-stand. The candle-wax had guttered all down one side, making what old women call a winding-sheet. He glanced at this as he took it up, and then at Mère Catherine. Then he moved forwards, taking her place as guide, and the glass of smashed wine-bottles that covered the ground cracked and crackled under his own boots, and the Curé's wooden-soled shoes. The huge sabots of Mère Catherine made short work of the splinters. Following in her Brobdingnagian footsteps, Juliette's small feet took no hurt.

A long, low house rose up before them. Its rows of barred basement windows indicated an extensive cellarage. Many of the windows were broken, and some of the ground-floor shutters had been wrenched off. Shattered furniture was thrown about in confusion, shrubs and rose-trees had been ruined, broken bottles were here, there, and everywhere. And as a slight sound of astonishment came from Juliette, the priest having mounted some red-brick steps and entered after his guide at an open hall-door, the old woman, to whom silence was evidently a sore penance, glanced back at the young one and said to her in a whisper:

"This is the Château Malakoff. Perhaps you remem-

ber ? . . . And all those broken bottles. . . . The soldiers drank the wine. . . ."

Then she hung her old white-capped head, and hurried after the Father, finishing the last decade of the Rosary as she went. Juliette and Breagh would have waited in the square hall on which the front door opened, but from the landing immediately above the master of the house looked back frowning, and imperatively beckoned them to ascend.

They went upstairs.

The door of the death-chamber stood open. From within came the murmuring sound of the priest's voice. Red-eyed servants knelt in prayer about the threshold. The master of the house was just within the door. His square black head and vigorous shoulders looked angry and wrathful. Old Catherine whispered to Juliette as she beckoned her to kneel beside her:

"It is his wife, Madame Bénoit. . . . They were only married a year !"

Then she clashed her great Rosary and joined in the prayers vigorously, while the thin crying of a baby in an adjoining chamber pierced the sudden, deep, profound silence that fell upon all present when the priest elevated the Host. A little later she broke down again, and hissed in Juliette's ear that Madame was dying, that the baby had been born too soon, because the mother had been frightened by the Prussians . . . that M. le Curé would give the Holy Oils after administering the Viaticum. And then in a gray pool of quiet that ensued some moments later, a woman's voice cried out with astonishment and terror and anger in it:

"*Mon mari ! . . . Mon mari ! . . . Au secours ! . . . Les Prussiens*——"

And the cry broke off short with a horrible suddenness; there was a momentary confusion, and then the priest came out, looking stern and sorrowful. He opened the

door widely, beckoning in several of the women. And Juliette, rising to make way for him, saw the wavering flames of tapers burning on either side of a Crucifix on a white-draped table, and the figure of the house-master, with a face of ashen grayness turned towards her, leaning over a white bed, clasping something even whiter in a desperate embrace. Only two great hair-plaits that flowed over the bosom of the dead woman, glittered like solid bands of burnished copper in the wavering candlelight. And Dawn crept in through the open window, with the scent of the crushed and trampled roses, and the smell of wine spilled and staling, and the uneasy twittering of frightened birds.

And then—they were picking their way over the broken glass-covered gravel-walk, and the priest, released from the obligation of silence, was eagerly asking for more particulars of the death of my Cousin Boisset.

"For the villagers of Petit Plappeville are hiding in the quarry of Seulvent. They will not return until the Prussians have left the neighbourhood, they have learned what they have to expect from these men when they are full of wine.... We will stop as we pass, and tell them what has happened. ... Then you had better come back with me to my presbytery. The soldiers have not left us much, but there will be coffee and bread!"

"But for me," said Mère Catherine, clumping along stoutly, "there would not be even bread and coffee. But I have my hiding-holes of which I tell nobody. And as Monsieur le Curé did not know, he could not say where they were!"

That was a pleasant meal in the little deal-shelved study that had somehow escaped when the presbytery was turned upside down. It stood next the church, a little ancient plain stone building with a square belfry tower and a spire covered in with blackened slating, and two recum-

bent effigies of the twelfth century, that were dear to the good Curé's heart. After *déjeuner* he explained that he was going to visit these treasured relics for the purpose of ascertaining whether they had suffered damage at the Germans' hands.

He carried a basket with him when he trotted away on his errand. P. C. Breagh, as he leaned by the open casement of the little ground-floor study, rather wondered why it should contain a corked bottle and a biggish loaf of bread.

Juliette had gone to help Catherine restore order in the kitchen. The young man's hand was in his trousers-pocket as he wondered, staring after the stout retreating figure in its cassock of rusty-black. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation, and pulled out the hand with something shining in it. The piece of gold given him by Juliette.

He put a hand on the sill, and was out at the window in time to see the priest unlock the heavy sunken door that led into the belfry-tower, and vanish into the dusk of the sacred place. He followed, to find the Curé struggling with a heavy ladder that led up to a trap-hole in the huge-beamed, plastered ceiling of the belfry—a ladder that was evidently seldom shifted from its cobwebbed place against the whitewashed wall.

"Couldn't I do that? I'm a good deal stronger than you are . . . Halloa! . . . Lucky I was there!"

P. C. Breagh had thoughtlessly spoken in English, and the priest, who had not seen him enter, had nearly dropped the ladder. He said quite reproachfully, as the young man caught and steadied the ponderous bit of timber:

"Why have you followed me? Is it that you wish to speak to me privately? If so, pray do not do so in your English, which is sufficiently like German to give me an unpleasant agitation of the nerves!"

P. C. Breagh explained, exhibiting the golden coin, that it had been given him by Mademoiselle to secure a Mass.

"But certainly she shall have a Mass. Though five francs will be more than sufficient. Retain the coin, Monsieur, until I can find the necessary francs of change. You see, we are poor in this neighbourhood . . . it is to be expected!" The good Curé smiled, and added: "As you see me, I am rich compared with many of my *confrères*—even richer than some of my superiors. Therefore, if you will describe to me the features of the priest who read the Office, it may be arranged with more propriety that he shall offer Mass." He added, seeing the young man hesitate: "Recall his features. Describe his person if you can!" . . .

P. C. Breagh recalled and described. When he had done, the Curé said, in a tone of quiet conviction:

"That priest will not need Mademoiselle's five francs! . . . And he is not only my superior. . . . He ranks above the angels. . . . Monsieur has spoken face to face with a glorious Saint of God!"

Something like an electric shock tingled from the roots of P. C. Breagh's hair down his spine, and passed out by way of his heels into the worn flagstones. He tried to speak, but his palate and tongue were stiff. The priest went on:

"Upon earth he was the Curé of Ars. As a Catholic, Monsieur has learned of him. But that he foretold this War, possibly Monsieur does not know? . . . A year before his holy death. . . . Since it has happened . . . this War that the holy Curé prophesied, he has revisited the earthly places where he prayed and laboured and suffered. . . . He has succoured the wounded. . . . He has appeared, just as he was when alive, to the dying, and cheered and consoled them so that they have departed in joy and peace. . . . In the world this will not be credited. It does not matter! . . . What matters is, that those who perhaps asked the Saint of Ars to intercede for them

in their hour of desperate need, have received proof that in Heaven, where he now dwells, he is still what he would have wished to be, a worker on behalf of souls. . . . He said this to me, twelve years ago, with that smile that the good God had given him, to make poor doubters sure that He Himself will one day smile on them in Heaven——"

He stopped and wiped his face with a handkerchief that was unaffectedly a blue duster, and, noticing the sweat that had started on the other's face, interrupted himself to cry:

"But Monsieur is still holding that heavy ladder! . . . How could I be so forgetful! . . . No! it is not to be replaced against the wall. It is to be attached by the rings in the uprights to those hooks at the edge of that trap-door. . . . Since Monsieur has been favoured with a vision of the Saint of Ars, he is worthy of all trust and confidence. Let Monsieur but fix the ladder while I turn the key in the door, and then he shall see a pigeon that I keep in the belfry-tower!"

And the good man bustled to the door and locked it, and then came back to test the steadiness of the ladder, and mounted with asthmatic wheezings and much display of darned socks and venerable carpet-slippers, and tapped three times at the trap-door.

It was lifted at the signal, and P. C. Breagh beheld the gaunt and sunburnt face of a French Cuirassier, peering down out of the gloom of the spire that was faintly lighted by delicate lines of morning sunshine, gilding the upper edges of the shingle-boards that roofed it in.

"Thanks, thanks, my father!" the Cuirassier muttered, as the bottle of coffee and the loaf were handed up into his eager, shaking hands.

"Did you sleep?" the priest asked him, and the soldier answered in the affirmative, adding that he had been awakened by footsteps in the church below him at the earliest break of day.

Said the Curé:

"My child, it was I. A member of my parish was dying —I came to the church to take the Blessed Sacrament from the Tabernacle. . . . I forgot that you would probably awaken and suppose that your presence here had been betrayed! . . . But all is well! and a cart of brushwood will stop before the presbytery this evening, and carry more than its load when it is driven on. It is going to a farm near Audun—from there you will be able to escape into Luxembourg, and from thence rejoin the Army when your wounds are sufficiently healed. It is said that the Army of Châlons, with the Duke of Magenta and the Emperor, now marches north from Rheims towards Sedan." He added as white teeth flashed in the dark face, and the sullen eyes gleamed scornfully: "You will please yourself as to serving again! You have already suffered greatly for our country!"

The soldier said roughly:

"I would die for her with a good heart! . . . But I will not fight again for this Emperor and his Marshal, by whom France has been sold and betrayed!"

"Well, well! . . . *Au revoir*, my child, and may Our Lord protect you," said the priest, sighing, and beginning a puffing retreat down the ladder. "Shut the trap-door down carefully, keep perfect silence, and remember that it is very dangerous to smoke. The curls of vapour can be seen rising between the shingles. I observed it when we had workmen here in Spring!"

Then he descended, and with P. C. Breagh's aid put back the ladder, unlocked the belfry-tower door, and they went out into the clear bright autumn air.

"That soldier came last night," the Curé whispered, as they stopped to lock the door with the heavy iron key that was corroded with rust where use did not maintain its brightness. "He was taken prisoner in yesterday's

battle, found to be wounded, disarmed and left to shift for himself, with others in the same condition. One of them—in whose company this man was—had concealed a pistol, and had the daring to attempt the life of M. de Bismarck—or General Moltke—I am not sure which! But the shot missed its mark, and instantly all those who had seen it fired, with others who knew nothing, were massacred in cold blood. This man by a miracle—escaped! . . . How, I know not! He says he fell into a pit full of dead, and lay there expecting to be buried with them, until the darkness came to cover his resurrection from the grave."

They went back into the presbytery. The priest went to look for the fifteen francs of change out of Juliette's gold piece. She came out of the kitchen, from which Catherine's bedroom opened, and showed herself freshly laved, and attired in spotless neatness, her face no longer swollen with weeping and weariness, her superb hair brushed to dull cloudy silkiness, and newly coiled upon the summit of her little queenly head.

Her eyes shone brilliant and hard as blue jewels, as she said to her friend in a low, vibrating tone of excitement:

"Mère Catherine says that yesterday a French prisoner tried to shoot M. de Bismarck, and nearly succeeded. . . . See you well, I would like to meet that man!"

"Why, Mademoiselle?"

"To kiss the hand of one so brave, Monsieur!"

He regarded her in silence. She went on almost with hardihood, throwing back her head, and looking at him with eyes that gleamed between their narrowed lids.

"See you well—if I were only beautiful, I would give my beauty to the man who saved France!"

Her hearer's heart began to pound violently, and a dimness like mist came before his sight. Through it he was aware of long eyes that gleamed like wonderful azure jewels, and a small red mouth that pleaded for the soul

of P. C. Breagh. . . . He saw that the under-lip was like the bud of a pomegranate, and that the curve of the upper disclosed teeth as white as curd. . . . Then he heard the silver voice say with a sigh in it:

"But I am not beautiful . . . not even pretty. Ah, Monsieur, if I but were ! . . ."

She was hating herself as she saw his look respond to hers. As the amber sparks in his gray eyes leaped into fire and his under-jaw thrust out savagely, she thought:

"There is something of my mother in me—more than a little ! How dared I scorn her—I, who can speak and look like this ?" And she repeated with a plaintive, lingering inflection: "If I were . . . if I but were !"

For the primal Eve is in all women, believe me. When the first Woman bowed herself in her apron of leaves to strike out between the lump of iron ore and the flint-flake, the spark that blown within its nest of dried moss, begat Fire, she laughed and then wept; for she remembered how she had learned of old from the Serpent, wise Teacher of guile and evil ! to kindle the hot spark of Desire in the hearts of men.

This knowledge would have come to Juliette as a legacy from Eve, her earliest ancestress, even had she not been born of Adelaide.

Meanwhile Breagh saw nothing but the little red mouth with the subtly wooing smile on it . . . the gleaming jewels that were shadowed by their covert of black lashes. . . . Her will bent heavily on his, weakened by his worship of her. In another instant he would have asked what she wanted him to do ?

But the heavy footsteps of the priest, clumping on the little crazy stair, recalled Breagh from the rapids towards which he had been drifting. In another moment the Curé came into the room. He had a knotted blue handkerchief in his hand, which weighed somewhat heavily. He said

with a good-humoured smile as he untied one of the knots, and took out a little pile of silver:

"Here behold my savings-bank! Your fifteen francs, Mademoiselle!"

He was earnest to count them out and return them to her, and she was as earnest that the coins should not be given back. . . . But she could not deny her poverty when the good man charged her with it, saying:

"Accept the return of this money as a mortification salutary for the health of your soul!"

Then he tied up the handkerchief and stuffed it away under his cassock, and asked them:

"Where are you journeying together, my children? I have a reason for wishing to know!"

He had turned to P. C. Breagh, still thrilling with the memory of that strange look Juliette had cast upon him. The young man answered, glowing through his sunbrown:

"Wherever Mademoiselle de Bayard is desirous to go!"

The Curé pursed his mouth and turned to Juliette; and then sabots clumped in the passage, and a cracked voice cried from the door:

"'Mademoiselle' and 'Mademoiselle,' when she is no more 'Mademoiselle' than I am! . . . Why not 'Madame'? . . . Call things and folks by their right names!"

There was a terrible pause. Juliette was enduring agonies. The Curé pursed his mouth, and rounded his mild eyes behind their iron-rimmed spectacles. Mère Catherine went on triumphantly:

"It was her father's dearest wish that she should marry his old friend's only son. She told me that when we were washing up the coffee-bowls, out in the kitchen there. . . . When the Prussians came to France, she went to Belgium with the young man's mother. '*To celebrate my marriage,*' she told me, '*because M. Whatshisname was there!*'"

P. C. Breagh had a sensation as of a weight of cold lead in the stomach. His feet seemed shod with lead, his arms hung down inertly. His tongue might have been turned to lead, so impossible was utterance. "*Married! . . .*" kept on ticking inside his head. "*Married! . . .*" and with maddening iteration, slowly as the clapper of a tolling bell. "*You knew it! . . . She knew it! . . . Married all the time!*"

His dull stare was set upon the face that had smiled on him so wooingly. It was snow-white now, and the eyes were hidden beneath their heavy fringes of black. The eyebrows were knitted, the pale lips set rigidly. The Curé looked at them a moment, and then asked, plump and plain:

"You are really married? My good Mère Catherine is not deceiving herself?"

Juliette shut down her stern upper lip upon its little neighbour, and raised clear, sorrowful eyes.

"As she says, I went to Belgium to celebrate my marriage. Now that I have returned, I shall await my husband here in France. My father esteemed him highly. He is M. Charles Tessier. He lives in the Rue de Provence, in the town of Versailles."

Whether the good Curé scented the quibble, we are not at all inclined to ask. We are concerned with P. C. Breagh, whose enchanted castle had crashed into dust and brickbats. One glance at his face, sharp as a wedge of cheese, and bleached under its wholesome freckles and sun-tan, told his Infanta what ruin she had wrought. But if he had seized and shaken her and cried, "You lie!" she would have lied again, defiantly. Was she not married, when her Colonel had believed so. . . . She would be, from now, in thought and word, the wife of Charles Tessier. Ah, Heaven! . . . The thought was more unwelcome than ever it had been.

Ah, Heaven ! if that dear dead father could but have known this brave young Englishman. Would he have been in such haste to break his daughter's heart ? . . . And, ah, Heaven ! again, if this burning of her boats meant parting, how could one live without one's comrade now.

He was so simple, and Juliette adored simplicity. He was so straightforward and honest, one could not guard the heart. When he had thought her dead, how piteously he had cried to her, " Juliette ! Juliette ! . . ." When she had crept from under the bed the lance had plunged through, barely missing her, and Breagh had dived at her and caught her up and hugged her, despite her terror and misery, she had known a wonderful thrill. . . .

" Mine !" those fierce young arms conveyed, as they had strained her to his broad breast. Was it wicked, was it unnatural in one so newly bereaved of the noblest and dearest of all fathers, to have been taken by storm in those moments of desolation—to have dreamed since then, of the rapture of being able to answer: "*Yes, yes ! . . . Your very own ! . . . Never anyone's but yours. . . .*" ?

Alas ! if Juliette had been unnatural in yielding to such thoughts, was she not now punished ? She had dealt with her own slight arm, the blow that had shattered the fabric of her dreams as well as his. . . . She would never again see that light in the eyes of Monica's brother; never—against all the accepted traditions ruling the pre-matrimonial affairs of a young French girl of good family,—be hugged in that rude, possessive, British way. But what loneliness, what terror, what danger had driven her into the arms that enfolded. . . . Besides, she would atone by marrying Charles Tessier. A tepid future passed by the side of the young cloth-manufacturer extended before her. . . . She could not restrain a shudder at the thought, even while she mentally renewed her vow that, for the

sake of him who had planned it, she would embrace such a future with resignation. . . . It flashed upon her now, with blinding clearness, that not only must the future be embraced, but the man. . . .

"*Tear the picture. . . . Forget the dream!*" The words of de Bayard's letter came back to her.

Ah, well!—she had done with pictures and dreams. . . . For her, realities. The comrade looked as though Reality had hit him smashingly. She hardly recognised his cheerful voice as he answered to some leading question put by the Curé:

"I am ready and willing to act as escort to Madame. It would be risky for her to attempt to return alone to Versailles."

She tried to meet his sorrowful gray eyes and succeeded. She bent her little head and said with an admirable assumption of newly-wedded dignity:

"Monsieur Breagh is very amiable. I will accept his offer with gratitude. When my husband learns of his great goodness, he too will thank him. Alas! at this moment my poor Charles is far away! . . ."

She sought for a tear, and found more than she had expected. For a whole thunderstorm of big, bright drops burst from those wonderful eyes.

She fell into a Windsor arm-chair polished by the worthy Curé's stout person, and dropped her arms upon the table, and her head on them, and sobbed, sobbed, sobbed. . . . The priest beckoned Breagh from the study. They were going to make arrangements for the journey. Horrible Mère Catherine, cause of all the misery, came and cackled over the prone, abandoned head. . . . Madame was going to start early to-morrow morning. . . . Allowing for the disorganisation of the railway-service, Madame would reach Versailles by noon of the same day. The husband of Madame would presently arrive to find her waiting for

him. Heaven would shed blessings on their joyous reunion. Let Madame take her occasion of soliciting the patronage of St. Christopher, patron of all travellers. The first little male cherub that should bless the union of Madame and Monsieur would naturally be christened by the name of the good Saint.

LXI.

They drove in a country cart to Etain over roads bestrewn for the most part with the *débris* of the falling Empire, and there caught a train starting for Verdun. It was crammed with wounded French soldiers lying on straw in trucks and horse-boxes. Women jostled one another at the doors of these, to supply the poor sufferers with soup and fruit, bread and coffee. The news of the retirement of Bazaine upon Metz was in every mouth, although, thanks to the cutting by Uhlans of the telegraph-line between Metz and Thionville, the Emperor did not receive the Marshal's wire until the 22nd.

The Warlock had lost no time. Already the blockade of the doomed fortress-city was so far completed that only the most daring French scouts were able to worm their way through the enemy's investing lines.

For, even as the octopus, desirous of increasing his family, throws off a spare tentacle which becomes another octopus, from the First and Second Armies of United Germany had been evolved a Fourth Army of Six Corps under the command of the Crown Prince of Saxony, whose Advance of Guard Cavalry were already over the Meuse.

The Army of the Prussian Crown Prince had traversed the roads south of Toul and entered the basin of the Ornain. The King of Prussia, with Bismarck and Moltke, had started to march on Paris through the dusty-white plains of Champagne.

His Great Headquarters had already reached Bar-le-Duc. One of his scouting squadrons of Uhlans had captured a French courier at Commercy. Thus Moltke had learned that the mounted regiments of Canrobert's Corps had been left behind at the Camp of Châlons, and that Paris was being placed in a state of defence to resist an investment expected hourly.

On this very day the vast Camp had been abandoned, the Imperial pavilions, the mess-houses, officers' quarters and kitchens were blazing merrily, the lines of rustic *baraques* usually occupied by the troops were marked out by crackling hedges of fire. While MacMahon, at his camp near Rheims, was torn between Ministerial orders emanating from the Empress, insisting on the immediate relief of Bazaine, and his own conviction that the order of march should be back by the directest route to defend the menaced capital.

Said the Man of Iron to Roon, whiffing a huge cigar as the steady downpour of rain swirled down the gutters and drenched the Bodyguard on duty outside the King's Headquarters at Bar-le-Duc:

"We barricade the straight road that leads to Metz. Will the fellow face the risks of a circuitous march leading him near the Belgian frontier? I should be personally obliged to him to decide quickly . . . One does not desire to linger in a Capua as dismal as this."

Bismarck-Böhlen brought him a telegram. He was about to open it when the Warlock hastily entered the sitting-room that served as ante-chamber, flourishing a copy of *Le Temps*, issued in Paris on the previous day.

"A Uhlan of the Advance has got me this paper. He took it from the person of a respectable bourgeois at whose house in Cligny he and his comrades called to drink a drop of wine. Judging it a welcome gift to me, the brave fellow rode here to bring it."

"There is wine of another kind on those pages," said the Minister, pointing to the journal with a smile.

Moltke read from the blood-stained paper:

"'*The speeches delivered yesterday at the Chamber are unanimous in the declaration that the French people will be disgraced for ever if the Army of the Rhine be not relieved. The despatches received during the sitting of yesterday's Privy Council, from the Prefecture of Police, the Ministry of War and of the Interior, were of a nature to cause apprehension of the keenest. But the disposition of the people of Paris can be ascertained by any person whose ears are not stuffed with Court cotton-wool. Do not these shouts of "Dethronement!"—these cries of "A Republic! A Republic!" become louder every day!*'"

He added:

"This bears out the text of Palikao's intercepted wire of yesterday to the Emperor; and the second from the Empress, virtually saying: 'Abandon Bazaine and Paris is in revolt!' . . ."

Commented the Minister:

"The Empress-Regent talks like a young woman. Palikao argues like an old one—the speakers in the Chamber gabble like a pack of old gossips, not one of whom looks beyond the end of her own nose. Paris was in revolution at the beginning of August. She will be a full-blown Republic before Christmas, whether Bazaine be abandoned or not."

Moltke said, helping himself from his silver snuff-box:

"MacMahon has not the courage to resist a consensus of quackers. He will march east, and uncover the Paris road. I may say, I had already drawn out private tables of marches which would thwart him in any case. What have you there? A wire in Secret Code?"

Bismarck answered:

"It is in Russian, with which language the sender knows

me to be acquainted. He is an agent of our Secret Service, who combines the trade of wool-stapler with the profession of notary, and holds the post of Sub-Prefect in the town of Rethel. He communicates by private wire that the Emperor has telegraphed the Prince Imperial that the junction with Bazaine will not be attempted, and that the march of the Army of Châlons will be directed upon Sedan. He states that when he quitted Rheims to-day the Imperial Headquarters had left for Tourteron. . . ."

"*Ei, ei!* Is he trustworthy?" asked the Warlock, putting away the silver box.

The Minister answered succinctly:

"The intelligence he supplies is usually worth the money he is paid for it."

He went on:

"He has got into touch with the Roumanian Straz, who has not received cash for some dirty work he did in July at Sigmaringen, and who judges it advisable—Napoleon Bonaparte, Grammont & Co. being insolvent,—to transfer his services to the opposite firm. . . . He adds that Straz possesses, or says that he possesses, free access to the Prince Imperial. He appears to think our interests would be served by kidnapping the boy."

"Would they?" asked Moltke.

The Minister raised his shaggy brows, and answered smilingly:

"You are acquainted with the Countess's views in connection with the youngest Bonaparte. If the Queen does not want him to hand her tea and comb her lap-dog, why should I not take M. Lulu home as a present to my wife?"

"You are jesting!" said the Warlock, shaking the wise old head in the scratch-wig. "You have told this stinking rogue that decent German men make not war upon women or children. . . . When the time comes that we are guilty of such things, Germany will be near her fall."

"Her barometer predicts a rise," said the Minister drily, "at this particular moment."

"With God's help we shall fulfil the prediction!" returned the Warlock, going to a table where lay spread a map on a comprehensive scale of an inch to a mile. "We will talk over this with the King, when the Crown Prince and Von Blumenthal come over from Ligny. It will be wiser to delay the movement on Paris, and hit this weather-cock of a Marshal with all our forces. So, he marches his Army on the Meuse! *So'o!* . . ."

And he hummed a bar of the little song about the weeping flowers and the shining starlets, as he set the mental machinery in motion that resulted in the Grand Right Wheel.

LXII.

THE closed shutters of the Tessier house in the Rue de Provence gave that pleasant, airy, well-kept residence standing behind its high garden-walls of stone-faced brick, festooned with autumn-tinted creepers, an unoccupied and cheerless air.

Repeated rings at the bell of the white-painted gate of wrought-iron upon the right of the heavy *porte-cochère* topped by the lozenged archway, elicited a caretaker in the person of the wife of the gardener-coachman, who cried out joyfully upon recognising one of the ringers, and broke into a spate of words:

"Mademoiselle! . . . Madame Charles! A thousand pardons for the error! But a return so unexpected. Nothing is ready. . . ." She queried, her eyes becoming circular as they drank in the fact that the newly-married wife of her master had arrived in company of a strange young gentleman in a shabby brown suit of foreign make, and a straw hat decidedly the worse for wear: "Madame

Tessier has not accompanied you ? . . . Or Monsieur Charles ? . . . Nothing has happened ?" Upon being assured that her employers were well, and still in Belgium, she raised her eyes piously, and heaved a sigh of relief. "In these days such terrible things happen !" sighed the gardener-coachman's wife. "No one knows who the Prussians will not kill next ! . . . Though, what with the soldiers that have gone away—regiments and regiments marching with their bands !—and the guns—thousands of guns rolling and rolling !—one would say that France possessed enough men. . . . But who knows ! One can feel the fears of the people like a dark cloud blackening the sky. . . . They say that at Meudon the trees have been cut down and trenches dug, and beautiful villas blown up with gunpowder that the Germans may not live in them when they come. Of what use then, the great cannon that break the windows when they fire them from the Forts of Issy and Meudon, Vanvres and Mont Valérien, if they cannot keep such people back ?"

She had looked at the young man who accompanied Madame Charles as she put her question. He answered, with appreciation of the shrewdness prompting the question:

"One wishes one could answer that ! But it is all true about the trenches and so on. . . . All the main roads leading north and west and east from Paris have been cut up in the same way. And the bridges have been mined—but they will not blow them up yet. They will wait until the Prussians come !"

"*Grand Dieu !* And all our hospitals here are full of wounded soldiers. They arrive in trains or waggons every hour. . . . People wait at the railway-stations and at the barriers in crowds to see them. Sometimes one cries out: '*My brother !*' or '*My husband !*'—or '*My son !*' . . ."

The wide mouth of the little woman widened in a

grimace of misery. She gulped and sniffed, and the tears began to tumble from her beady black eyes. "My brother Michel has been killed! . . . My sister has received an official letter that says so. Also my husband's nephew Jean Jacques—the dear youth who served Madame Tessier so faithfully. . . . Madame Charles must remember him going about the house in his striped jacket, cleaning the silver and sweeping and polishing the parquet. . . . And now my poor Potier, whom Madame Charles cannot have forgotten. . . . At fifty years of age, he has been called to serve again!"

Her poor Potier was even then marching with MacMahon's hundred thousand towards Montmedy by Mézières, and the end that was to meet him there, as the little woman dried her eyes with her blue apron, and bestirred herself to welcome one whom she firmly believed to be her young master's wife.

"No luggage! Madame has returned without luggage!" she commented mentally, as the driver of the hack vehicle that had brought Madame and her companion from the station, was paid and jingled away.

Then as she shut the outer gate and locked it she realised that the companion of Madame Charles was a foreigner. She could hear the pair conversing in an unknown jargon as they stood together near the terrace-steps. Upon which the perplexity of honest Madame Potier was banished by an effort of simple reasoning. The strange young man would be a Belgian—an *employé* of M. Charles. M. Charles had determined, all the world knew, to engage a resident book-keeper. This must be the Belgian book-keeper who had accompanied Madame. For his manner was humble to dejectedness, as became a dependent, and he looked at Madame with extreme wistfulness. He was actually saying:

"This means good-bye, I suppose, doesn't it? . . ."

Juliette returned, with her heart wavering in her like a wind-blown taper-flame:

"If you desire it, Monsieur, of course it is good-bye!"

He perused the gravel-walk with an appearance of great interest. It was extraordinary that neither he nor Madame had brought any luggage. . . . Madame Potier fairly writhed with curiosity to learn the reason why. She could restrain herself no longer. She cried, madly clashing the gate-keys:

"But the luggage, Madame! . . . The carriage has driven away without depositing it. What of the trunks, imperials, portmanteaux, bonnet-boxes, that Madame possessed when she went away? . . ."

She was a little, voluble, excitable Frenchwoman, with shiny black hair, bright, snapping black eyes, and a hectic spot in the centre of each cheek. As yet her environment had not brought home to her what War meant in reality. When she had wept for her brother and her nephew by marriage, and at parting with her husband, she had relapsed into her accustomed round of duties, not unpleasantly varied by her newer responsibilities as guardian of her mistress's empty dwelling. Like many other excellent women of her type, she could not read or write, and relied on local news imparted by her gossips and bits of intelligence left by the baker with his bread-rolls, or served by the woman who brought the morning's milk.

Now Madame Charles turned to her and told her:

"The boxes and imperials are left behind in Belgium, dear Madame Potier. As for the articles I brought with me, they have been torn to pieces by the lancers of M. de Bismarck. Also the luggage of this gentleman, who has, like myself, nothing left but the clothes that he is wearing. Thank him, for had he not protected me, I should never have reached this house!"

"Great Heaven!" Little Madame Potier threw her

hands and eyes heavenwards. "What wretches! What terrible dangers Madame has surmounted! . . . What horrors one hears of!—what miseries and sufferings! . . . Death is everywhere. . . . One would say it was the end of the world! But still there is hope, is not there, Madame? . . . Our glorious Army . . ."

Juliette turned a snow-white face upon the eager woman, and lifted a little, tragic hand. She said, and in that tone and with that look most feared and dreaded by the man who loved her:

"Our glorious Army has been betrayed and massacred! With these eyes I who speak to you, have seen vast tracts of country covered with the slain!"

Madame Potier winced and drew herself together. Her black eyes glared. The red spots sank out of her sharp face. And Juliette went on:

"I traversed one of these huge fields of carnage. Many Germans were there—but most of the dead were our French soldiers. . . . And in the silence you heard their blood running, and the earth lapping it like a great thirsty dog! . . ."

In the throat of the other woman, listening, an hysterical knot began growing. You could see it working as her dry lips twitched. She held her breath as though to keep back a scream.

"I sought amongst all these dead men for my father," said Juliette. "And I found him! . . . His dead hand beckoned me from a mountain of corpses. . . . I would have known it without the ring that he always wore. . . . And I went to him and sat beside him, and asked God to let me die also. . . . And a sword seemed to cut my soul from my body. . . . I grew cold—and all was blackness about me! . . . I felt no more . . . I breathed no more . . . I thought: '*This must be death!*' Then a voice spoke to me. . . . I was too far away to answer. It called me

loudly—and I came to life again. . . . I rose up. . . . I saw the face of the man who had called me. . . . And then I knew why I must not die just yet !"

She laughed, and so strangely, that Madame Potier cried out in terror. She would have rushed at the girl and clutched her but for Breagh's strong interposing hand. He said in her ear in the bad French she took for Belgian:

"Madame has travelled many miles, fasting, and she has suffered a great bereavement. . . . Do not question her, but go and make ready her apartment, and prepare food for her. Hot soup,—she needs that before all !"

The little woman addressed looked sharply at the speaker, then mounted the two steps leading to the terrace, scuttled across it in front of the shuttered windows of the drawing-room and billiard-room, descended the steps upon the other side, and vanished in the direction of the basement kitchen-door.

Then P. C. Breagh, wondering at his own daring, stretched out a hand, and touched Juliette's. It was very cold. He lifted it gently and led her unresisting, down the ivy-bordered path that led into the pleasaunce.

For she must not be left alone in this mood, and the garden was still, and scented, and beautiful in the noonday sunshine. Its beds of autumn flowers blazed from their setting of smooth and still verdant turf. The great wistaria on the stable buildings was magnificent in trails of fading purple blossoms. The oaks were browning, the chestnuts shedding their yellow fans. The stately limes were bleached pale golden, the tall acacias were already stripped quite bare.

It was not yet the season of song for thrush and blackbird, but the robin's sweet shrill twitter came from the heart of a hawthorn, marvellously laden with gorgeous crimson fruit. The breast of the bird, not yet attired in

fullest winter plumage, showed orange as japonica-berries beside the ripe haws' splendid hue.

Said P. C. Breagh, trying to speak lightly and naturally:

"Look at him! What a pretty little beggar! Nobody ever told me you had robins in France! . . ." Then as the bird cocked his round bright eye and hopped to a higher twig, and Juliette's pale face remained unchanged, and her fixed stare blankly ignored him, her sorrowful friend cried out in a passion of entreaty:

"Juliette! Juliette, take care! For the love of God, don't yield to this! Oh, Juliette! have pity upon others, even if you have none on yourself!"

The cry touched a chord that responded in vibration. The stiff waxen mask softened, and became the face he knew. She looked at him, and her eyes were no longer fixed and glassy. She asked in wonder:

"What do you want me to do?"

Trees hid them from the house with its closed slatted shutters. They were near a rustic seat that was under the great tulip-tree. Breagh led her to the seat, made her sit down, and sat himself beside her. He made no effort to retain the little hand. "*It is not mine,*" he said to himself as he looked at it, and then his heart jolted, and stood still. . . . Where was her wedding-ring? . . . Didn't French married ladies wear the plain gold circlet? Of course they did! Then why? . . . Came her faint, sad voice again:

"What is it I might do and do not do, for myself and others? Tell me, Monsieur, for I do not like to be unkind!"

He said, trying to speak clearly, and unemotionally:

"It is because you love so greatly those who are near you, that I ask you to be kind to these and to yourself. You have suffered a great loss, you brood upon it to your injury. . . . You dream of revenge upon a man, high-

placed and powerful, whom you accuse of having brought about the War."

She had taken off the black silk veil that she had worn as head-covering. A dry leaf fluttered down from the tulip-tree and crowned her splendid coils of mist-black hair. Her thin arched brows were drawn together and frowning; from the dark caverns that Grief had hollowed round them looked eyes that were cold and hard and brilliant as blue diamonds. She asked in almost a whisper:

"And if I dream . . . and accuse . . . am I not justified ? . . . Because he saved your life, do you take his part ?"

Breagh answered her with a sudden spurt of anger:

"I take no part. I speak for your own good. If a woman as frail and sensitive as you are, yields to the promptings of a hate so overwhelming, a time comes when she cannot if she would, control them or rule herself. . . . When voices sound in her ears, urging her to deeds of violence, and she cannot silence them by any prayers. . . . Then she goes away into a strange dim country peopled with shadows—lovely or queer, strange or awful. And that is the country of Madness, where live the insane. . . . Even those who love her as I—as your friends and your husband love you !—can never reach her there !"

The pleading seemed to touch her. Two great tears overbrimmed her pure pale underlids and fell upon her shabby black gown. She said, trembling a little:

"You are very good to have so much solicitude for me. I thank you very humbly. It is true that I have sustained a terrible wound, and that it rankles—is that the right word ? My nature is not gentle—not amiable !—I long to strike back when I am wounded. . . . When those I love are hurt . . ." She stopped and controlled herself with a visible effort, then resumed: "I have it in me to be

pitiless! See you well, there is something of my mother in me!"

"Of your mother? . . ."

He echoed the words in dismay that was almost ludicrous. . . . He had never asked whether Juliette possessed a mother or not. Now he looked to the house, expecting one of the shuttered French windows to open, anticipating the appearance of a middle-aged lady arrayed in mourning crape and weepers, and Juliette followed and understood his look. She said, with sorrowful meaning:

"Where friends of my father live, Monsieur, you do not find my mother. She is very beautiful, but not good, not noble, as he! . . . She left him many years ago, when I was an infant. See! I could not have been higher than that!" She measured with her hand above the turf the height of the baby of five years, with hair that had been silky and yellow as newly-hatched chickens' down. She said, her clear, transparent face darkening with the shadow that swept across her memory: "Before I encountered you at Gravelotte I had passed through a terrible experience. This lady—of whom I dread to speak!—was thrown across my path. She did not reveal to me that she was my mother, when I quitted Brussels in her company. . . . She represented herself as the wife of an officer who had been wounded. She told me that my father was a prisoner in the hands of the Prussians. She took me to Rethel, that I might lay my case before the Prince Imperial, and beg him to obtain my father's release."

P. C. Breagh looked at her doubtfully, fearing—what he most feared for her. She said, drawing a folded envelope from the bosom of her black school-dress:

"Never shall I forget how graciously Monseigneur received me. Here is a little keepsake he gave me with his own hand. . . . You shall hold it in yours, because you

are my friend, and Monseigneur would permit it. . . . No one else, because no one deserves it save you !"

And she exhibited with dainty pride the splinter of rusty scrap-iron. The envelope bore a small Imperial crown in gold, with the initial "E" beneath. . . . It was directed in violet ink and in a handwriting pointed and elegantly feminine, to S. A. the Prince Imperial, with the Great Headquarters of the Imperial Army, at the Prefecture of Metz.

"He is so brave ! . . . He wanted to join M. de Bazaine and fight the Prussians. He stamped . . . he wept . . . he suffered such chagrin when the telegram came from the Emperor . . . No ! I must not tell you of the telegram. . . . My Prince said: '*Mademoiselle shall hear it because she is discreet !*' . . ."

She folded away her treasure in the envelope that bore the Empress's handwriting, and hid it away again in its sweet nest close to her innocent heart. Life and vivacity were hers again as she descanted upon the graces and gifts of her Imperial princeling, and P. C. Breagh listened, grateful for the change in her. The shadow came back for a moment as she told him:

"And when I descended to the vestibule, Madame had gone away. . . . She had been seized with faintness in the moment of our arrival, when she had encountered a stranger passing through the hall. . . . Then I went back to the hotel, and crept up to my room quietly. Madame —whom I had discovered to be my mother !—was engaged with a visitor. . . . I do not know at all who he was. But I heard him say, on the other side of the door that was between us . . . '*When she comes, you shall present me to the little Queen of Diamonds !*' And he laughed. . . . *Mon Dieu !* how strange a laugh ! . . . It made me feel cold. It makes me cold even now to remember it. . . . But I do not think I have been really warm since the

night upon which I found the portrait, and my mother said: '*The discovery was inevitable! Now, with your leave, I am going to sleep!*' "

With such truth did she render the very tone of the sumptuous Adelaide's languid irony, that P. C. Breagh started as though he had been stung. Somewhere he had met someone . . . a woman who spoke like that? . . . Who was she? Where had they encountered? . . . He beat his brains to evoke some reply, in vain. And Juliette went on:

"It does me good to tell you this, Monsieur, though I thought at first I would not. You will understand how terrible it was to discover in this lady, who had deceived me, the mother whom I have believed dead until a few months ago. There was something in her very beauty, and ah! she is so beautiful!—that made me regard her with terror. . . . See you, I prayed to Our Blessed Lady for aid to overcome that terror. Then at the daybreak, I rose and went to her bed. When I saw her sleeping, I think I feared her more than ever. The face can reveal so much, Monsieur, in sleep. And hers was a sleep uneasy, and troubled by visions. . . . Without waking she said a thing so strange . . . '*Only a woman of fashion would be guilty of such infamy!*' . . . What made you start so violently, Monsieur?"

For P. C. Breagh had jumped as though he had been hit by a bullet. His mouth screwed itself into the shape of a whistle, his eyes rounded unbecomingly. He remembered when and where he had heard that utterance,—in the resonant accents of the Man of Iron, and addressed to the adventurous beauty encountered at the Foreign Office in the Wilhelm Strasse, Berlin.

What were the words that had preceded the sentence, scathing in their irony, terrible in their implied contempt?

"*It would have required fewer scruples and more toughness*

than Agamemnon possessed to have offered up an only daughter to Venus Libertina. . . . Only a woman of fashion would be capable of such infamy. . . . Pardon! but you have dropped your parasol!"

And an English boy had picked it up, and seen the devastating change wrought in that softly-tinted mask of sensuous beauty, by Conscience, roused to anguish by the vitriol-splash of scorn.

So the Duessa of the Wilhelm Strasse was Madame de Bayard. How strange the chance encounter that had brought them together in that house! What was the bargain she had hoped to drive with Bismarck? What had she intended when she had taken her daughter to Rethel? Who was the man who had been waiting to be presented to the little Queen of Diamonds? . . . And how true had been the instinct that had warned the girl of danger, whose nature her Convent-bred innocence made it impossible for her to conceive.

She was speaking:

"Do not think me wicked or insensible, Monsieur. I am deeply sensible of all your goodness! . . . I know very well that there is truth in what you say! . . . You are noble, candid, magnanimous. . . . You do not comprehend what it is to hate so that it is torture . . . like fire burning here, here, and here! . . ."

She touched her slight bosom and her throat with the joined finger-tips of her small hands, shielded her eyes and forehead with them an instant, then swept them wide apart. A curious gesture, and notable, in its suggestion of surging overwhelming emotion, and the dominance of an impulse obsessing in its evil strength.

"Here where it is so quiet, I shall recover in a little. . . . I shall become calmer. . . . I shall learn to sleep again. . . . You cannot imagine how much I wish to sleep, Monsieur! . . . But when I lie down it is as though

great doors in my brain were thrown wide open. There is music . . . and processions of people come pouring, pouring through. . . . There are voices that make great clamour—there are hands that wave to me and beckon. But I clench my own hands and lie still—so very still! I pray to Our Lord that one figure may not pass amongst the others, for then I know I shall have to get up and follow him. . . . I cry to Our Lady to cover my eyes with Her cool hands, that I may not see if he does come. But always he passes; walking or driven in a chariot—riding a great horse, or borne upon the shoulders of guards. And then I resist no more, for it is useless! I wake!—and I am standing in the middle of my room!"

Said P. C. Breagh, comprehending the situation: "In a word, you are suffering from overstrain and consequent insomnia. And I wish I were a full-blown M.D., because I think I should know what to do. But you will let me prescribe the doctor, if I may not undertake the case, won't you? What's that? Who's there?"

Something like a gurgling laugh had sounded behind them, and Juliette glanced round, and back at Carolan with something of the old gaiety in her eyes.

"It is the Satyr of the pool, where Madame Tessier grows her water-plants. He laughs like that when the water bubbles in his throat."

She rose and followed a little path leading through a shrubbery of lilac and syringa. Beyond rose the ivy-hung and creeper-covered eastern boundary-wall of the pleasaunce. From the grinning mouth of the Satyr-mask wrought in gray stone the slender spring spouted no longer. It trickled from a hole in the pipe behind the mask, and yet the laugh sounded at intervals as of old. The wall below the mask was wet, and green with a slimy moss-growth, fed by the dampness; the ferns that bordered the pool, the water-plants that grew in it, had

suffered from the diminution of their supply. The brook had diminished to a slender trickle winding amongst stones crowned with dry and withering mosses. Juliette cried out at the spectacle in sheer dismay.

What would Madame say if she knew how spoiled was this, her cherished bit of sylvan beauty? Never mind. When she returned all should be found in order of the best. The kitchen-garden, perforce neglected since the departure of M. Potier, should be weeded diligently. The dead roses should be snipped off with loving care, the withered blossoms pulled from the sheaths of the flaming gladioli. . . . The place needed a mistress, that was plain to Mademoiselle de Bayard's order-loving eye.

"We will work here! . . ." she said, and almost clapped her hands at the thought of the pleasant labour waiting them. "Me, I adore gardening! And you also—do you not, Monsieur? . . ."

Could P. C. Breagh deny? He cried with a hot flush of joy at the thought of long days of sweet companionship: "Indeed I do! . . . and of course I will, Madame!"

"'*Madame!*' . . ."

She had nearly betrayed the truth, but she nipped her stern upper lip close down upon its rosy fellow. . . . Was she not married? Nearly, if not quite. . . .

So nearly that until M. Charles appeared with Madame, she would maintain the character of a recent bride. It would be better not to re-kindle in the gray eyes of Monica's brother that fire that had blazed there so fiercely a few hours before.

LXIII.

How strangest of the strange, to love a person so nearly a stranger! . . . What had Monica's brother been thinking of? In January they had met, and parted coldly . . .

in August they had met again, and had spent together not quite three days. . . . But what days! to brand themselves upon the memory. After that morning on the bloody field of Gravelotte—that night spent in the woodshed behind the cottage of Madame Guyot—that gray dawn when they had walked, hand clasped in hand, behind the bearer of the Blessed Sacrament, could He and She be ever anything but friends? . . . Close friends . . . dear comrades, linked by indissoluble bonds of memories . . . of perils shared, of experiences unforgettable by both. . . . What would Life be like when one had to face it shorn of the sympathy and companionship of Monica's brother? . . . Juliette did not dare to question. The thought of such loneliness was enough to freeze the heart.

Meanwhile, here was Madame Potier, heated and triumphant, proclaiming Madame served with the best that could be got. A lentil soup—an omelette with ham,—coffee, and fruit from the garden. One would do better later, let Madame only wait. . . . The apartment of Madame Tessier had been got ready for Madame . . . the small room usually occupied by M. Charles might be prepared for the Belgian gentleman. . . . Or—since that room was dismantled for cleaning purposes, and Madame Potier herself occupied the apartment adjoining . . . would Monsieur mind sleeping at the garden cottage? She would guarantee there, cleanliness and more than comfort. . . . Was not the bedroom hers and her poor Potier's? . . . Had they not slept in that bed for ten years past? . . . Ah, wherever her poor Potier might now be sleeping, he would never find the equal of his own bed. . . .

The proposal, possibly prompted by discretion on the part of the excellent Madame Potier, was gratefully accepted by Breagh. And from that hour, under the sheltering wing of the hectic little caretaker, began a little idyll of

happiness for two young people, who asked nothing better than that it should last.

It was exquisite autumn weather. They rose early, and passed out of the iron gate together, and so through the quiet streets to Mass at the great church of Nôtre Dame in the Rue St. Geneviéve. Or they would attend it at the Chapel in the Convent of Carmelites that is now the Petit College in conjunction with a colossal Lycée. Then they would come back to *déjeuner*, laid on a table under the trees on the lawn, and afterwards they would work in the garden, or read, or talk. But they read no newspapers, and for the best part of two months they never exchanged a word about the War.

It was the treatment devised by P. C. Breagh, who had failed of his practising degree in Medicine, and under this *régime* the shadow that had rested upon Juliette lifted day by day. He had taken Madame Potier into his confidence, and she entered into a conspiracy for the better nourishing of one whom she firmly believed to be the wife of her master. She dragooned Juliette into drinking a vast quantity of milk, and the girl's haggard outlines began to fill out, and her dreadful dreams ceased to haunt her. Sleep returned, strength revived, her grief for the lost father, unassuaged, became less poignant. She could look back upon the happiness of their old life together without the anguish that rends the heart.

Daily she doled out to Madame Potier the small sum necessary for housekeeping. Under the able management of the hectic little woman a very little money went a long way. Such butter, such cheese of Brie, such excellent bread, milk and cream, such country chickens, such fruit and vegetables from the garden, were daily set upon the table, that a honeymooning Prince and Princess could not have been better served. The reward of Madame Potier was to see her handiwork vanish under the combined on-

slaughts of Madame Charles and Monsieur. . . . She waited upon them at table, and joined in their conversation, after the inconvenient habit of her simple kind.

As, still after the habit of her kind, she conceived an affection for her young mistress, she developed cunning of a wholly lovable sort. The first time she heard her idol laugh, she clapped her hands with rapture. Another day, in pursuance of a stratagem she had elaborated, she placed upon the dinner-table a dish, with the blatant boast:

"My poor Potier used to declare by all that is sacred, that no living woman could cook *ragoût* of veal except his wife!"

She whipped off the cover. Madame Charles helped Monsieur in silence, and unwittingly P. C. Breagh played into Madame Potier's hands. For he sniffed approval, and said, as she set his sizzling hot plate before him:

"M. Potier was quite right! If the woman lives who can cook a better *ragoût*, I've never met her, Madame!"

Juliette's eyes sent forth blue sparks as she sat erect at the head of the table. Her sloping shoulders sloped terribly, her upper lip was preternaturally long. She helped herself to a very little of the dish before her, and began to eat without perceptible enthusiasm. Madame Potier stood back and watched her, her red hands on the hips that were embraced by her apron of checked stuff. She said:

"Madame Charles will perhaps have forgotten the *menus* she used to prepare for Madame Tessier and M. le Colonel." She crossed herself at the mention of the dead man's name.

Juliette's blue eyes filled, and the stiffness went out of her. She laid down her knife and fork. P. C. Breagh scowled savage reproof at Madame Potier. But Madame, at first overwhelmed, recovered herself. She went on, as though she had never broken off:

"*Menus* composed of excellent—but excellent dishes! . . . What a pity to think that Madame Charles cannot make them now!—Look you, to cook well is an art that may be easily forgotten! . . . Hey, Madame is not eating to-day!"

Madame said in accents that were dignified and frigid:

"There is a little too much sugar in the *ragoût*, dear Madame Potier, otherwise it is, as Monsieur says,—excellent!"

"'Sugar.' . . . But one doesn't put sugar——" P. C. Breagh was beginning, when both the women turned on him and rent him, figuratively.

"Who does not put sugar? Will Monsieur answer me?"

The piercing shriek was Madame Potier's. And the silvery accents of Madame Charles took up the burden, saying:

"Dear Monsieur Breagh, the delicate brown of colouring that pleases you,—the suavity that corrects the sharpness of the salt,—these are due to sugar—burnt and added at the last moment. But one should use it with delicacy, or the effect is absolutely lost!"

"Can you really cook?" he asked in his senseless, masculine fashion, smiling rather foolishly and staring at her with his honest gray eyes.

And Juliette answered with a trill of delicate, airy laughter:

"Do you find it so incredible? Well, I will not boast now, but presently,—you shall see!"

Next morning, when Madame Potier returned from market, with an unusually heavy basket, Madame Charles donned a stuff apron of the good woman's, and vanished with her into the kitchen, whence their voices could be heard chattering as though a particularly shrill-voiced pea-hen were singing a duet with a reed-warbler or crested

wren. The twelve o'clock *déjeuner* was memorable, the five o'clock dinner a marvel, from the *croûte au pot* to the *sole au gratin*, and from the sole to the *filet aux champignons!* There were *beignets* afterwards, crisp, adorable, light as bubbles. P. C. Breagh ate hugely, and praised, while the excellent Potier chuckled. Her work, she told herself, sat at the head of the table, in this slender creature with the wild-rose cheeks and the beaming, sparkling eyes.

Juliette had found in a trunk full of garments that had been committed by her to Madame Tessier's keeping, a simple dinner-dress of thin filmy black. Jet gleamed in the trimming of the skirt and polonaise, and upon the elbow-sleeves and about the V-shaped neck of the bodice, the sombre gleam of it threw into marvellous relief the ivory whiteness of the young, fresh skin. Her dainty slimness was emphasised by the absence of all ornament. Her marvellous black hair, fine as cobweb, silky without glossiness, crowned her chiselled temples with its dusky coils. When she lifted a slender arm to thrust in a hairpin more firmly, the sunset reflection from the sky caught the fragile hand and reddened the delicate palm of it, and the tiny nails that shone like rosy, polished shells.

She did not look as though she had been toiling in a kitchen among casseroles and stew-pots. Rather an elfin Queen of Faerie—a Titania robed in cobweb and moonbeams, whose smile sent a breeze of happiness flowing through the sad, empty places in one's heart. For the heart of the young man who loved her grew the emptier the more her sweetness filled it, and realised its own sorrow the more she showed herself to be naturally a daughter of joy.

She belonged to Charles Tessier, and all these sparkling looks and lovely flushes, these sweet, unconscious provocations of gesture and tone and inflection were for him—and no other man. . . . This remembrance was always

alive in Breagh to rear a barrier between him and his infanta. . . . And other knowledge too was his, held in common with Madame Potier and many thousands of other people, that he had not dared to share with Juliette.

But to-night he had realised that the truth could no longer be kept from her. She was cured. There could hardly be a relapse into the old conditions, even when she learned the dreadful truth. And even if risk there were, she must be told that truth by him to-night, or hear it from the lips of some stranger. It was a miracle that she had remained so long in ignorance of the fate of France—her beloved France.

"For seven weeks we have played together like two children on the brink of an open grave!" he said to himself. "Have I been right or wrong? Only Time can tell!"

Madame Potier had clattered out of the room, and across the hall, and down the kitchen stairs to make the coffee. Behind those little black beady eyes of hers she hoarded the knowledge of wellnigh unspeakable things. She had been faithful in guarding them from the knowledge of Juliette. But now she had said to P. C. Breagh: "You must speak to-night, Monsieur! We have done our best, but we two cannot keep from the poor little lady that to-day the King of Prussia will enter Versailles!"

She had given him a look as she had left the dining-room, that had said: "Remember!" P. C. Breagh, nerving himself to the ugly task, felt like one who seethes the kid in its mother's milk.

As he pondered, something cool and fragrant struck him on the forehead. He picked up the red carnation that had fallen upon the dessert-plate before him. He inhaled its fragrance lingeringly, holding it so as to hide his mouth. Over it his troubled gray eyes scanned the face that was all alight with sparkling gaiety. Why had Juliette thrown the flower? Why had she challenged him? She, who had

up to this moment been decorous and reserved almost to stiffness. Was it true that in every woman lives a coquette ?

She was asking herself the same question, pierced by the conviction that her grandmother would have been horrified. But it had been impossible not to hurl the perfumed missile at the brooding face with its smear of dark red meeting eyebrows, and the short, square nose and the pleasant lips.

He had on the shabby suit of brown, for his funds did not permit of a visit to the tailor. His new linen was spotless, and under the narrow turned-down collar he wore a loose-ended black silk tie. The bow was pulled out upon one side so much longer than upon the other that Mademoiselle's feminine fingers itched to adjust it. How careless he was in matters of dress, this adorable young Englishman !

She was restless this evening. He had aroused her curiosity. Some hours after she had retired upon the previous night, she had risen, and stolen barefooted to the open window that looked upon the moonlit garden, and parted the thin curtains that hung before it, and peeped out. . . .

There was not a breath of air to bring the autumn leaves down. A white dew sparkled on the turf that Breagh kept closely cut. The countless clocks of the white town of royal palaces tinkled and chimed and belled and boomed out the witching hour of two.

Her room was on the east front, facing the garden. . . . A downward glance showed her that Breagh was pacing there.

Up and down, backwards and forwards, leaving black prints of footsteps upon the lawn that was all be-gemmed with dewdrops. The presence of so many reservoirs makes Versailles more than a trifle damp.

How rash ! . . . How unwise ! Did the young man desire a fever ? Juliette, accustomed of old to subject her

Colonel, for his health's sake, to a daughterly surveillance, had a lecture ready on the tip of her tongue. She might have spoken, had not the patrolling figure come to a standstill, and looked up wistfully at her shrouded window, and said something in a low, dogged, dejected tone, and shaken his head and gone away.

"I've got to tell!—and I don't want to tell!—and I don't know how to tell, that's the bother of it! . . . Give it up! . . . For another night!"

Without the muttered words, the glance and the headshake would have conveyed his doubt and his perplexity, to the subject of his sore reflections, returning in a flutter of strange, sweet wonder, and expectation, to her recently-vacated couch.

You may imagine how she tossed and turned, seeing his miserable gray eyes looking at her out of the shadows in the corners. Those eyes could blaze in tigerish fashion when he was angry, for she had seen. . . . When she had crept from under my Cousin Boisset's death-bed, they had flamed with a wonderful light of joy and triumph, and when he had caught her fiercely to his breast. . . .

Oh! to be snatched again into those strong young arms, and held against the heart that shook one with its beating. . . . Was it wicked to feel that one hated Charles Tessier? Was it unnatural, in these days of mourning, to think of anyone except her lost Colonel? . . . Was it not exceedingly unmaidenly to determine that Monica's brother should say whatever it was he had got to say, and did not want to say, and did not know how to say, no later than the following night? . . .

True—she had purposefully conveyed to him the impression that she was married, but she would explain that she had meant that she would be by-and-by. . . . Alas! what would her grandmother, that sainted woman, have said regarding this lapse from the way of truth?

LXIV.

But she certainly had not planned to throw the carnation. The missile hurled, she had been seized with paralysing fright. The shade of her grandmother seemed to rise, appalling in its shocked propriety. One could almost hear her saying: "*My unhappy child, you have become more like your mother than I could have believed, had I not seen! . . .*"

Now in sheer desperation she mocked on, dissembling her terror.

"What is the matter? Why are you so dull and *distrait?* Are you tired of living shut up in a garden? Answer me, I pray you, Monsieur!"

He looked at her, and his cleft chin squared itself, and his broad red eyebrows lowered into a line of determination. He said doggedly:

"The happiest time of my life has been spent shut up in this garden! I believe you know that very well!"

She burst into silver laughter and cried to him teasingly:

"But you did not look at all happy when I peeped at you in the night from my window. See! Thus, with the hands miles deep in the pockets, and the shoulders elevated to the tips of the ears!"

She jumped up and mimicked the slouching gait of the midnight cogitator, brilliantly and with fidelity, parading between the dinner-table and the long windows that opened towards the lawn. He recognised himself and reddened, while he laughed, with vexation. He had never before seen her in this mood of Puck-like mischief. He had yet to become acquainted with another phase of Juliette.

"Did you learn to act so well at your Convent?" he asked her, and she answered with sudden gravity:

"Acting can never be learned, Monsieur. . . . It is a

gift, of the good angels or the bad ones, which can be brought to perfection by use. To ' make ' an artist of the stage is not possible. He or she is born . . . and that is all I know. . . ." She added, " When I make my appearance at the Théâtre Français they shall send you a *billet de faveur*. Then you shall see acting. I promise you !"

She was more like Queen Titania than ever as she held up her fairy finger, and smiled and sparkled at the bewildered young man.

" For example, if MM. les Directeurs assign to me the part of a grandmother of sixty, do you think I shall put on wrinkles with paint ? . . . *Non, merci !* The true artist says to herself, ' *I am old !*' and she is old. . . . ' *I am ugly !*' and she becomes hideous. ' *I am wicked !*' See here ! . . . Is this a face to regard with love, Monsieur ?"

The last sentence had been croaked, rather than spoken. No Japanese mask of a witch could well have been more furrowed, puckered, scowling, or malignant than the face that had been Titania's a moment back. Breagh called out in protest, half angry, half amused, wholly fascinated; and Oberon's bright Queen came back again to say:

" Or I can be stupid, very stupid,—if that will please you ! . . . Gentlemen sometimes admire stupid girls. . . . We had one at the Convent—your countrywoman and a great heiress. Miss Smizz—the daughter of Smizz and Co., Tea Merchants, of Mincing Lane."

She banished all expression save a smile of absolute fatuity, puffed out her cheeks, narrowed her eyelids, permitting her eyes to twinkle through the merest slits. She giggled inanely, and said, combining the consonantal thickness of catarrh with the gobbling of a hen-turkey . . .

" All the eggstras. . . . Whad does expedse batter whed you've got a Forchud to fall bag od ? Besides, Ba says I bust barry iddo the Beerage, ad accoblishbeds are dod usually expegded of a doblebad's wife !"

She added, in her own voice, summarily banishing Miss Smith, her expectations, and her splutter:

"Do not be vexed with me, Monsieur Breagh, I beg of you! . . . I am perhaps a little excited. There is something strange in the air. . . . I have a humming in my ears as though great crowds of people were talking very softly. . . . What is it?" she asked in bewilderment, pressing the fine points of her small fingers into her temples. "What is the matter with me to-night? . . ."

Then P. C. Breagh spoke out, in a tone that hurled a challenge to Destiny.

"There is nothing the matter with you! . . . That is the glory of it! You were ill, and now you are well. . . . You can laugh again, and sleep again, and cook a dinner and help to eat it. . . . You have made capital use of your time! . . . For we came here on the twenty-first of August, and this is the fifth of October. We have been shut up in a garden, as you say yourself, for more than six weeks! . . ."

"Can it be possible?"

She looked at him intently and realised his earnestness. He answered with a glow of pride in his work.

"Fact!—And in all the time you have never seen a newspaper or asked a question about the War. Even when you have heard the great guns firing from the forts below Paris—Issy and Vanvres and Montrouge and the rest—you never said a word that showed you noticed. . . . Do you know why? . . ."

His voice wavered exultantly. She looked at him and slightly shook her head.

"No! . . ."

"Because I willed you to. By George! there are times when I believe that even yet I'd make a doctor. Mental suggestion was the line I took with you. . . ." He rubbed his hands. "Not that I could have done anything without

the help of Madame Potier—first-class little woman!—regular brick that she is! . . . You see, your brain had sucked up all the trouble it was capable of holding. You wanted rest. . . . Well, you've had it, thank God! Night after night I've walked up and down, backwards and forwards, on the lawn, just as you saw me doing last night, saying: 'Sleep! Forget! You have my orders to!'"

The tone of mastery thrilled, even while the muscles of her mouth twitched with repressed laughter. He was beautiful in her eyes as he leaned forwards smiling at her. She said, repressing her tears, and concealing her admiration:

"But last night you did not say 'Sleep!' but something else, Monsieur. . . ."

There was a swift change in him, telling her that for once he was not listening. His eyes were alert, his ear eagerly drank in a sound composed of many sounds that grew louder as they came more near. Now the whole room was full of the trampling of horses and the fainter clink of spur and scabbard and bridle. . . . Cavalry were passing up one of the great avenues south of the Rue de Provence—not the Avenue of St. Cloud—probably the Rue des Chantiérs—there was a distant roar of cheers. . . . Then in one little oasis of silence came the rolling of carriages, and then the walls shivered with the roaring of lusty lungs:

"*Hoch der König! Hoch der Kronprinz!*"—and the shouts were drowned in a great burst of martial music, and the trampling of men and horses, mingled with the beat of drums and the blare of trumpets, rolled on tumultuously again.

The blood ebbed from Juliette's cheeks and lips to her heart as she listened. Then the double-doors of the dining room were butted open with the corner of a wooden coffee-tray, and Madame Potier appeared with a steaming pot

and two cups. She was pale round the hectic patches that blazed in her thin face. Her black eyes leaped to Breagh's with an eager question in them . . . "*Have you told her?*" . . . and he answered with an almost imperceptible shake of the head.

Then before either of them knew, Juliette had risen. She went to the little woman, and kissed her on the cheek. She said, taking one of the gnarled work-worn hands in one of hers, and holding out the other to Carolan:

"Dear friends, to whom I owe so much, tell me now what in your great compassion you have kept from me. For I think the time has come when I must hear!"

The time had come, indeed, with the ring of Prussian cavalry hoofs upon the ancient cobblestones, and the roll of the carriages that came with them. And before either of those the girl addressed could speak in answer, the resonant sound of a Prussian trumpet pierced their silence:

"*Clear the way! Clear the way! Here comes the King!*"

And followed a cry, pitiful as the wail of a hare in a gin-trap: "Those are Prussians!" . . . and another scream, shrill and thin and clear. . . . Then a crash! . . . Madame Potier had dropped her coffee-tray. . . . Before the hot steam of the spilled liquid rose up from the Tessier carpet, the small hand Breagh had clasped was suddenly, violently snatched from him. He sprang to his feet, but Madame Potier had been quicker than he. She had caught the girl round the waist, and now wrestled with her. . . . The silent, desperate strife was horrible. The slender black-clad figure writhed for freedom like a snake. . . . Then all at once the life seemed to go out of it. . . . They carried her to the sofa and laid her down. . . .

"Monsieur should have told her!" Madame Potier said angrily. "Why leave it to the Prussians to break the news? . . ." Tears were running down her cheeks as she unfastened the girl's dress, and rubbed the limp hands,

while Breagh dropped Cognac between the little teeth, a drop or two at a time.

And presently Juliette was looking at them, not wildly, and Madame Potier was answering: "It was nothing! . . . Madame was startled into an attack of faintness when I was so clumsy as to drop the coffee-tray. Now I shall go and get more, and Monsieur will talk quietly to Madame as she lies there. She must hear everything that we have kept from her. . . . Yes, yes! that is quite understood!"

And she clumped away, with a backward glance of disdain directed at the masculine boggler, and Breagh drew a chair near the sofa where his wan Infanta lay, and sat down and told her all.

Red sunset flooded the autumn garden as he talked. Not a leaf stirred, hardly a bird uttered a nooning note. But the strange sound that had haunted not only the ears of Juliette went on incessantly. It was the sighing and whispering and muttering of the vast crowds that had filled the Rue des Chantiérs behind the lines of troops to witness the entrance of the conquerors, and now gorged the great Place of the Prefecture, (above whose entrance flaunted the standard of the Hohenzollerns)—filled the upper end of the Avenue de Paris,—and surged over the vast expanse of the Place d'Armes, beating in black and restless human waves against the lofty blue and golden railings of the Royal Château, above whose golden dome floated the black-and-white Prussian Standard and the white Flag with the red Geneva Cross.

We know what he had to tell her. . . . The false step of MacMahon, the unavailing attempt of Bazaine to break out of Metz, the conflict on the Meuse, ending in defeat and the loss of 7,000 prisoners with guns and transport. The flight and escape of the Emperor to the fortress-city of Sedan. . . . The battle between the ill-led, unfed, dis-

pirited French forces, and the Three Armies. The taking of 20,000 French prisoners, the wound of MacMahon, leading to his resignation of the chief command into the hands of General Wimpffen, summoned from his command in Algeria in time to capitulate. The pitiable surrender of the Emperor's sword to the King of Prussia. His transport into Belgium as a prisoner of War. The flight of the Empress from the Tuileries. The formation at Paris of the New Government of National Defence. The entry of the King of Prussia into Rheims, and the arrival of the First and Third Armies in force before Paris. The fight upon the heights of Châtillon—the defeat of Ducrot by a Bavarian Division,—the German advance upon Nemours and Pithiviers,—the investment of the capital, now encircled with an iron ring.

For three days the Crown Prince had been established with his Staff at the Prefecture. This day had seen the Great Headquarters of the Prussian King removed to Versailles, from Baron Rothschild's Castle of Ferriéres. . . .

Truly it had been time to break the news to Juliette. She lay still during the recital, only quivering now and then. She drank the coffee when Madame Potier brought it, and thanked the faithful soul affectionately. When the gas-lamps were lighted, and the shutters shut, she bade P. C. Breagh good-night in a faint whisper, and gave him both hands, saying with a liquid glance:

"Thank you, my friend ! . . ."

He whispered as he kissed the little fingers:

"You will sleep to-night, will you not ? . . ."

And she nodded in assent. But when he had gone to his bed at the cottage, the old terrible thoughts came crowding back.

That electrifying blast of glorious sound from the silver instrument of the Great Staff trumpeter had wakened and brought them like hornets buzzing and stinging about her

ears. . . . She longed for her friend, but he had departed. And the loneliness was too terrible to bear.

She caught up a little white shawl that she had brought with her, and often wore when walking in the garden upon chilly evenings, or going to Mass in the early mornings, before the sunshine had warmed the air. One turn of the wrist draped it faultlessly about her head and body. Thus shielded, she went into the hall, and laid her hand upon the lock of the door.

As she did so, cavalry horses ridden at a sharp trot came clattering down the cobbled street. They were pulled up outside the Tessier mansion. There was an imperious tug at the gate-bell. She waited for the opening of the kitchen-door.

Then she heard it unlocked, and the clatter of Madame Potier's clogs upon the terrace. *Klop—klop—klop!* they crossed the leads, descended the three steps that led to the gravel-walk, and went on to the iron gate. It was locked, as always, in the absence of Madame Tessier. Presently the keys clashed, the lock scrooped back from the mortice, and the hinges uttered a protesting cry. . . .

Then the harsh tones of a man, speaking French with a frightful German accent, turned the listening girl to ice. There was an exclamation from Madame Potier, a rejoinder in the stranger's gutturals. A horse trampled. The rough voice of the rider swore at the brute in German. Then there was a clatter of boots upon the pavement, with a great clinking of spurs and scabbard, and the now-dismounted rider said in his infamous French jargon:

"Go you before and open! His Excellency is coming in!"

Terrified Madame Potier obeyed . . . scuttling across the terrace like a terrified beetle. Juliette, paralysed with horror, heard the heavy spurred footsteps crunch and jingle up the gravel-walk and ascend the steps to the hall-

door. Almost directly, as little Madame Potier darted panting up the stairs from the kitchen, the hall-door bell clanged a deafening peal.

A carriage had rolled down the Rue de Provence, and stopped before the smaller gate, ere the door bell's iron echoes had ceased shouting through the house of the Tessiers. There were other voices at the gate, other footsteps upon the gravel. . . . They mounted the steps. A resonant, unforgotten voice said to the ringer in German:

"The Herr Intendant General may spare himself the trouble. . . . I will interview the people of the house myself!"

The person addressed replied in the harsh tones that had terrified Madame Potier:

"But supposing Your Excellency be met with some insolence? . . ."

The resonant voice answered with a smile in it: "In that case, Herr Intendant General, my Excellency will take the risk. There are only women in the house, and should they offer violence, I have Count Hatzfeldt and Count Bismarck-Böhlen here! . . ."

There was a laugh, gay, mellow, and careless, and a young man's voice answered:

"Your Excellency may safely rely on our protection!"

There was another laugh. Under cover of it, Madame Potier hissed into the head-folds of the white shawl:

"They have quartered the Prussian Chancellor and the Foreign Office upon us. That is what the sacred brute in the big boots and spectacles shouted, when I went down to open the front gate. . . . What is the Prussian Foreign Office?"

From the white folds of the shawl a sibilant whisper hissed at her:

"It is a man. They call him Count Bismarck. Now

if you love me, be quiet, and watch and listen. He shall ring the bell with his own hand. . . . Then I open the door ! . . ."

"But, Madame ! . . ." whispered the distracted caretaker.

No verbal answer. . . . The white shawl pulled closer, shrouding round the slender form and girlish features. A little hand, firm and unfaltering, ready upon the latch of the door.

Poor Potier whimpered. . . .

"Madame Charles. . . . My child ! my treasure ! for the love of Christ and Mary. . . . Tell me what you are going to do ?"

The bell rang again, with a new and imperious hand upon it. She well knew whose was the hand. And the snow-water in her veins became liquid fire. She threw open the hall-door and stepped back to admit the Man of Iron.

He stood upon the doorsteps like the house's master, a huge dominating figure, dressed as she had seen him on the battlefield of Gravelotte, in his high black, pewter-buttoned military frock and white peaked Cuirassier cap, riding-cords, and great black jack-boots with long steel spurs. He was powdered with dust as a man newly come off a journey, though his boots were clean, for he had driven in a carriage from Ferrières. Upon the step below him stood Count Hatzfeldt, his First Secretary, a man of thirty, tall, broad-shouldered, and *débonnaire*, wearing, as did Bismarck-Böhlen, the semi-military Foreign Office undress. The lean trap-jawed personage in a dark uniform with velvet facings, whom we must recognise as the Intendant General, waited in the background, glaring through his spectacles at the tardy portress in the white shawl, and the peaked face and flaring black eyes of little Madame Potier, who stood beside her mistress, as ready to spit

and scratch for her sake as a pussy-cat to defend its young.

There was no pause. The dominating figure stepped into the hall. His great Cuirassier sword clanked on the threshold. He touched the peak of his cap with his bare right hand, and said, looking down from his great height upon the women:

"This is the house of the Famille Tessier ?"

One of the women, who was swaddled in a white shawl, dropped him a stiff little middle-class reverence. Behind her, the other bobbed a serving-woman's curtsey. He went on, addressing White Shawl as the superior:

"This house, Madame, has been selected as the official residence of the Prussian Foreign Office. We shall pay you an adequate sum for our accommodation, and remain here some weeks . . . possibly three."

He glanced at Hatzfeldt, and said with a flicker of sardonic humour playing in his heavy blue eyes, and about the corners of the deeply-cut mouth that was masked by the heavy iron-gray moustache:

"Though the actual duration of the visit depends—not upon ourselves—but upon the decision of the United German Powers, and the position which they shall decide to take up with regard to Conditions of Peace. We are not the invited guests of France, whose stay can be cut short because our manners do not prepossess our hostess. We came because we thought it advisable . . . we will go when it is convenient to depart !"

"If Jules Faure could hear Your Excellency ! . . ." said Bismarck-Böhlen, grinning.

"He would cast up his fine eyes more tragically than he did at Ferrières," said Hatzfeldt, "when the three words '*Forfeiture of Territory*' drew from them so many patriotic tears. . . ."

"He is a weeper," said the Minister, pulling off his left

glove, "and Wimpffen was a posturer, with his '*Moi, soldat de l'Armée Français*'—and the Duke of FitzJames is a manufacturer of bugaboos. . . . Our German caricaturists should draw him as a pavement artist, holding the hat beside a horrible red-and-yellow chalk picture of our atrocious cruelties in Bazeilles."

LXV.

We know that Bazeilles had been on the thirty-first of August, a town of 2,000 inhabitants, mostly weavers, gathered about the ancient château that sheltered the boyhood of the great Turenne. Bazeilles had not observed the Law of the Neutrality of the non-combatant. The village had formed the extreme right of the French position on the day of the Battle of Sedan. Lebrun's Corps had occupied it, and its inhabitants had been seized with the fighting-fever, and had helped to hold back a Bavarian Division for nearly six hours. Elderly civilians armed with antiquated rifles had displayed desperate bravery. One old woman, possessed of an ancient horse-pistol, is said to have shot down three of the enemy. The men, their women and children, were now cinders mixed with heaps of calcined brickbats. The grim lesson had been taught very thoroughly. Bazeilles served as an object-lesson on Prussian methods throughout the remainder of the War.

"*I will remember Bazeilles!*" had flashed through the young head that was swaddled in white woollen. "*My friend shall not forget to tell me what was done there!*"

But the imperious hand of the Minister was upon the door of the billiard-room. She saw it summarily thrown open. He went in, followed by Hatzfeldt, Bismarck-Böhlen at their heels.

"Capital!" he said to them. "We will have this

arranged as a Bureau for the Councillors, the despatch-secretaries, and the cipherers. What is this ?" He went to the glass-door that led into the winter-garden, looked through and commented: " One could smoke a cigar here after dinner in wet weather, and very well it seems to me !"

The owner of the quick ears sheltered by the shawl of white woollen understood but little German, as she had previously said to her absent comrade. But what slight lore she had in the abhorred tongue had been gained in conversation with a Prussian mistress. She found that, thanks to the enemy's clear, melodious diction, she had no great difficulty in comprehending the substance of what he said.

His long heavy strides carried him next into the drawing-room, that apartment destined to become famous in history as the seat of the various negotiations which led to the treaties with the States of South Germany, the proclamation of the King of Prussia as German Emperor, and later, to the surrender of the City of Paris, and the settlement of the Conditions of Peace. The simply furnished, medium-sized room boasted a few mediocre oil paintings, a cottage-piano, a sofa, some easy-chairs, and wall mirrors framed in handsomely-wrought ormolu. Upon a little table against the wall stood an old-world timepiece, surmounted by a bronze figure with fiendish attributes, which engaged his attention curiously. His great laugh burst out, as he contemplated the grotesque.

" Now," he said, his voice still shaken by amusement, " if that malignant little demon be a model of the guardian spirit of the Famille Tessier, the Socialists and Ultra-montane will be of opinion that I have come to the right shop !"

The young men laughed at the jest uproariously. He joined them, crushing down their lighter merriment with

a mirthful giant's thunderous "Ha, ha! . . ." Then the double-doors of the drawing-room opened. He came out with his followers into the hall-place, demanding of little Madame Potier in fluent French whether gas was laid on in the rooms above:

"I think it probable, for you are a luxurious people in your habits, even down to the *bourgeoisie* and peasantry of France. At home I am accustomed to go to bed with a candle, and blow it out when I get between the sheets. But here in Gallia I shall do as the Gauls!"

"There is gas in the bedrooms, Monseigneur!" shrilled White Shawl.

"So!" He looked down from his great height upon the speaker. She caught up a box of matches from the hall table and thrust it into Madame Potier's shaking hand. . . .

"Go up quickly. Light the gas in the bedrooms. Monseigneur wishes to examine them all!" She added in her shrill voice: "They are in use at the moment, but can be vacated and got ready for the occupation of Monseigneur in something less than half an hour!" She broke off to shriek to the ascending Madame Potier. . . . "Quicker, Jeannette! Thou art always as slow as a tortoise! . . . But I come myself! . . ." And with a halting, shuffling gait which made Count Bismarck-Böhlen grin, and even the polished Hatzfeldt put up his eyeglass, she jerked across the beeswaxed parquet of the hall, and mounted the gray-and-red drugget-covered stairs.

What virtue lies in contrasts. When Juliette de Bayard walked, you learned what poetry could be in simple motion. Her skirts had a rhythmic swing and flow. Those little feet of hers made twenty steps to the stride of an ordinary English girl. At Mass, when folded in her white School veil, she advanced to the Communion rail to receive the Blessed Sacrament, she swam, she rocked as though upborne on waves of buoyant ether. Watching her, you

would have said that thus Our Lady must have glided onwards, bearing the gracious burden of her Divine Child.

This peacock-voiced creature who hid under a white shawl what the men who sneered at her dimly felt must be a countenance ugly to repulsiveness, had one shoulder thrust upwards and forwards, reaching nearly to the ear on that side. . . . A palpable curvature of the spine caused the curious gait, and possibly to this deformity might be attributed the voice that was so harsh, raucous, and torturing to the ear.

"Do not laugh. . . . It is pitiable rather than ridiculous," she heard her enemy say in his own tongue.

Hot wrath, fulminating indignation, mingled in Juliette with the pride of the comedian who has made an effective exit. . . . To be pitied by *him*, and for the second time! That liquid flame that circulated through her veins, illuminated her brain in its every cell and convolution, By its lurid light she saw her own intention in all its ugliness. Was she to blame, who had fled from this her destiny? Had she sought for her vengeance? Of his own will had he not come, this world-shaking Colossus, to find his Fate waiting for him?

And Breagh. What of her promise to her comrade? The thought was a knife-keen stab compelling a shriek. She stifled it in the folds of the shawl, bent down her head, and with an exaggeration of the grotesque gait, scuttled upstairs with the agility of an escaping spider, provoking a guffaw from the Twopenny Roué, a laugh from the well-bred Hatzfeldt, even a deep chuckle from the Enemy. Let him laugh! As she fled from room to room, and the gas-jets leaped up flaring and shrieking under her small, fierce hand, like little Furies and Vengeances, and tell-tale articles of feminine attire and use were caught up and thrust into a small portmanteau, she bade him laugh as much as he would. As she opened a cupboard by the

chimney-piece where Madame Tessier had kept medicines and cosmetics, and took from the shelf a flat-topped, wide-mouthed chemist's vial, and thrust it within her dress, deep into her bosom, she told herself that France should laugh before long !

Meanwhile her enemy and France's waited, chatting in the hall at the foot of the stair. When she descended, he went up with Hatzfeldt and Bismarck-Böhlen, and made a brief inspection of the rooms. His own choice was made with the least delay possible. Opening from the square, skylighted landing at the head of the main staircase, was a room, some ten paces long and seven broad, lighted by one window on the right side of the main front, looking towards the stables, and commanding a view of the pleasaunce and shrubbery from two more windows in the eastward wall. This apartment, which was partly above the dining-room, and had been occupied by Madame Charles Tessier, the Minister appropriated to his own use. A second room, communicating with this, and looking on the pleasaunce, and boasting also a glass window-door leading out upon the iron bridge topping the conservatory on the south side, he set apart for Bismarck-Böhlen.

A somewhat better-furnished room looking upon the Rue de Provence, would serve, as would the drawing-room upon the ground-floor, for the reception of strangers and guests. Privy Councillor Abeken would occupy the bedroom next to this, also with an outlook upon the Rue de Provence. A tiny cell near the back-stairs, only big enough to hold a bed, chest of drawers and washstand, was set apart for Secretary Bolsing. Upon the second floor, Dr. Busch or Privy Councillor Bucher would occupy the best bedroom, the two Prussian body-servants from the Wilhelm Strasse sleeping in the attic overhead. The two remaining chambers on the second floor, small, angular, ill-ventilated places, the women of the house were free to

move into, and retain if they desired. "Only in that case," said the masterful voice, "they must contribute their services towards keeping the house in order. Where I live there must be no idlers. That is understood!"

Below in the hall White Shawl and Madame Potier heard his strong laugh echoing amidst the empty chambers and his heavy stride shaking the rafters above their heads.

"I am pleased with my room, though it has a window opening towards the stables, where the detachment of troops supplying the sentries will be quartered for the present, with my orderly and coachman and the two grooms. But common sights do not annoy me, any more than common noises, and there are two other windows overlooking the park. The trees in their autumn colouring will remind me of my own woodlands at home. Altogether the place has been chosen intelligently. A more roomy and better-furnished house might afford spiteful people an excuse to accuse the Chancellor of the Confederated States of luxury—the love of which has never been a besetting sin of mine. True, I must have a table supplied well, punctually, and generously. . . . That is always an understood thing. A *sine qua non,* in fact. . . . The King is quite aware of this. . . . I told him again yesterday, . . . '*Sire, I must be fed properly if I am to make proper terms of peace!*'"

His great laugh sounded again as he came trampling downstairs, bringing with him a masculine perfume of Russian leather and cigars of super-excellent quality. And Hatzfeldt was saying in his languid well-bred accents:

"With Your Excellency's permission, I will now take leave of you—I must go and see the place where I am quartered. It is at No. 25, Avenue St. Cloud."

"So, then. . . . A pretty good distance from the Chancellor of the Confederation, should he require at some unusual hour the services of his First Secretary. . . . You

will have to find the Count more convenient lodgings." The Minister turned to the Intendant General, who barked:

"At Your Excellency's honourable orders, the change shall be immediately made!"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake! not to-night!" expostulated Hatzfeldt with graceful peevishness. "I am horribly done up with the heat and the dust we had on our way here. Why should the King have dragged us to Choissy-le-Roi, in order to see the troops? Cannot he see troops every hour of his existence? Ah! by the way! Did Your Excellency notice that at Villeneuve St. George the bridge of boats had been blown up?"

The Minister shrugged:

"Who can understand this destructive mania? It is a national disease peculiar to the French. Since the beginning of the war they have destroyed bridges and railways to the tune of millions—for the sheer pleasure, one would suppose,—of building them up again. Well, good-night!" He held out his hand pleasantly to Hatzfeldt. "Good-night to you, Herr Intendant General!"

The Intendant saluted stiffly and barked in his peculiar style:

"I wish a very good-night to Your Excellency!" Then he clanked down the steps after Hatzfeldt and over the gravel-walk to the front gate.

"I know what Count Paul has it in his mind to do," chuckled Bismarck-Bohlen, looking after them. "He will take a bath and dine at the Hôtel des Réservoirs."

"It would not be a bad plan to follow his example," said the Minister, "since some of the Foreign Office *fourgons* may be late in getting here. Unless Madame Tessier is prepared to supply us with a dinner upon the spur of the call?"

He added:

"Come, shut the hall-door. I see they have already placed sentries. The grooms and Niederstedt will bring in the luggage by the back door and up the servants' staircase." He continued as Bismarck-Bohlen obeyed: "They are particular about such matters in French houses, where there is so much wax-polishing of the floors and woodwork. Where are the women? . . . There were two. A *bonne* and her mistress, the proprietress. . . ." His powerful glance fell upon them standing near the doorway of the dining-room. He motioned them to enter and followed them in.

"Madame Tessier!" he began, taking as by right the chair at the head of the long shining dinner-table, upon which the tapestry cloth had not yet been replaced. He looked at White Shawl. The shrill voice cackled:

"Madame Tessier is in Belgium. . . . I am Madame Charles Tessier, the wife of Monsieur, her son!"

He said in his excellent French, laying on the table the flat white Cuirassier cap he had removed on entering:

"I congratulate M. Tessier! Can your servant cook, Madame?"

The shrill voice responded:

"Monseigneur must be judge of that when he has tried her dishes. She does her best—the excellent Jeannette! But if Monseigneur is to be served as befits his state and consequence . . . I should prefer to cook for him myself!"

"*So!*" He leaned one elbow on the table, meditatively regarding the speaker, and the lambent blue flame of humour danced and flickered in his eyes: "Since we do not require you and your domestic to leave the house—only to confine yourselves to the two smaller bedrooms on the second floor—it may be as well that you should assist to a degree in the kitchen. . . . But for all that does not require women we have our servants—you understand? And the *chef* attached to the service of the Prussian Chan-

cellery is extremely competent. He is—rather a personage in his way !"

Bismarck-Bohlen sniggered in his characteristic fashion.

White Shawl shrilled, gesticulating with a hand that resembled a claw:

"If your Prussian cooks better than I do—or even the *chef* of our *gredin* of an Emperor, he may call me a Bonapartist and I will not slap his face !"

The Minister drew his well-shaped sun-browned hand over his moustache, perhaps to hide a smile at the epithet. He asked with his powerful glance intent upon Madame Charles Tessier:

"So, then, you are not a lover of the Bonapartes ? What is your party ? Are you Republican or Monarchist ?"

She shrieked with raucous energy:

"I am a patriot, and a citizeness of the French Republic ! All my life I have execrated the Bonapartes. See you well—I do not love Prussians ! . . . But you have humiliated and dethroned this sacred pig of a Napoleon. . . . And for that I could kiss the hand that received his sword !"

The person to whom the shrill tirade was addressed listened with imperturbability, although Bismarck-Bohlen, standing on the other side of the table, between the windows, involuntarily clapped his hands to his sorely scarified ears.

Now the Minister said in his suavest French accents:

"The hand was not mine, Madame, I beg to assure you, but that of the King of Prussia, who is hardly likely to pay us a visit here. . . . Should His Majesty elect to do so your ambition may be partially gratified. You will see the monarch who has paid your Imperial bugbear so thoroughly well in his own coin."

Here Bismarck-Bohlen broke in. . . . "Excellency ! . . .

talking of coin . . . you told me to remind you of what happened the other day. . . ."

"Ah, so I did!" said he. "It is a mere coincidence, but worth remembering. . . . Upon leaving the weaver's hovel, near the village of Donchery, outside which you and Leverström waited while I discussed the terms of the capitulation with Napoleon in a garret containing a table, a bed, and two rush-bottomed chairs, the French Emperor presented five pieces of gold to the weaver, which Leverström afterwards told me he vainly endeavoured to buy of the man. His stupidity or the weaver's, we will not say now which was the greater! . . . But the coins displayed in unbroken sequence—the portraits of five rulers of France. There was Napoleon I., imperially wreathed, on a fine fat piece of 1820, a Louis XVIII., inane and aristocratic; a Charles X. with the knob in his nose, a Louis Philippe, looking like a *bourgeois*, and Napoleon III., Emperor of Ready-Made Plebiscites. . . ." He broke off to say: "And now, Madame, what news of this dinner? Can you supply it, or must we go elsewhere? Decide. I am always an economist of time!"

And the penetrating glance shaded by the shaggy eyebrows of the Minister questioned the meagre peaked countenance of which merely a wedge showed between the curtaining folds of the white shawl. . . . Lover of good cheer as he was, he was perhaps asking himself whether a creature so mean and pinched-looking could set before him the nourishing, well-flavoured, well-cooked dishes, calculated to restore energy to his giant's frame. She was studying the face revealed in the circle of light cast downwards by the shaded lamps of the gaselier above the dinner-table, half loathing, half fascinated by the tremendous personality now revealed.

How much the published portraits of the man lacked, she realised now, clearly. What mental and physical power,

and force, and energy were indicated in the lines of the great domed skull and the astonishing frontal development. What audacious courage and ironic humour were in the regard of the full blue eyes that rested lightly upon her own insignificance. . . . What deeply-cut, pugnacious nostrils he had; what a long stern upper lip the full gray moustache curtained. He had a cleft in his chin that reminded her of a friend she loved. . . .

This last and the other characteristics of the visage that confronted her, were fuel to her roaring furnace of hate. A baleful light blazed in the eyes she curtained from him. Her heart seemed a goblet brimmed with intoxicating, poisoned wine. And then a little thing tamed the snake in her. It drew in its quivering, forked tongue, covered the fangs that oozed with venom, lowered its hooded head and sank down, palpitating among its cold and scaly coils.

With all its power, the profound weariness of his face had suddenly come home to and arrested her. He looked, as was indeed the fact, like a man who had not known a good night's rest for weeks. There were sagging pouches of exhaustion under the masterful eyes, and the lines about the forehead and mouth and jaws were deeply trenched with fatigue and anxiety. With pain, too, for he was suffering from facial neuralgia brought on by nervous strain and over-exposure, and divers galls and blisters, the result of days spent in the saddle by an elderly heavy-weight. Now he yawned and leaned back in his creaking chair, and suddenly was no despot helmed with terrors, armed with power, mantled with ruthlessness, but a man fagged out, and tired and hungry, athirst for rest and the comforts of home.

He had a wife living, she knew, and sons serving in the Prussian Army. Perhaps he had a daughter who loved him, too? . . . Perhaps she was thinking of him . . . praying

for his return in safety. . . . Oh, God ! . . . The dreadful thought was not to be tolerated. . . . It must be driven away . . . banished from the mind, if one was to carry out *the plan*. . . .

All these thoughts volted through the brain under the white shawl in the passing of an instant. The next, she heard the shrill voice say:

"It is for Monseigneur to decide ! . . . There is no difficulty about dinner, that is, provided Monseigneur can eat a good soup of artichokes made with cream ? . . ."

His startlingly blue eyes laughed. He acquiesced, seeming to snuff the air with his deeply-cut nostrils.

"There is nothing better than *purée* of artichokes—provided it serves as the prelude to a solid, sustaining and well-cooked meal ?"

White Shawl shrilled:

"There might follow a six-pound trout, boiled, with sauce *à la Tartare*. . . . One came in this afternoon, fresh to a miracle, a fish from the Cauche near Montreuil."

He said to Bismarck-Bohlen:

"The trout of the Cauche are capital eating . . . especially those caught in the upper part of the stream, a mile below Parenty. What else, Madame ?"

She proclaimed in the raucous voice that made Bismarck-Bohlen grimace and shudder.

"A dish of cutlets and a *ragoût* of partridges with little cabbages. It is now upon the fire, simmering in the *casserole*—I meant it for next day !"

Like the trout, it had been designed for P. C. Breagh's delectation.

She added:

"And there are a cold ham, a peach-tart and a jelly of Maraschino, and I could toss up a savoury omelette to follow the sweet dishes. As for dessert . . . we have pears and plums from the garden. . . . But, Monseigneur . . ." It

was greed that made the woman's strange eyes glitter so intolerably—"I shall be well paid for the excellent food and all my trouble, shall I not, Monseigneur ? . . . In good French money—not in Prussian notes ?"

Under the heavy moustache he showed his sound, even teeth in a laugh of enjoyment.

"In good French money. You have my promise. So—you do not like our Prussian notes ?"

White Shawl screamed:

"They are good where they come from, it may be, Monseigneur ! . . . But here—the people would as soon take dead leaves for pay ! . . ."

He thrust his hand in his breeches pocket, pulled out a gold Napoleon and threw it ringing on the shining table. Her eyes snapped. The little claw-like hand darted from the folds of the enveloping white shawl and pounced on the gold piece. She curtsied like an elder-pith puppet to the great figure sitting at the table-head, and with the extraordinary gait that combined a hitch, twist and shuffle, hobbled out of the room, shrilling as the door closed behind her:

"Jeannette ! Jeannette ! Monseigneur will dine here ! Make you up the kitchen fire ! I will go myself to the cellar and get the fruit. . . . And the wine . . . Monseigneur will certainly require some wine ! Later on you must help me get ready the bedrooms. Put out sheets and pillow-cases to air !"

Bismarck-Bohlen was saying, as he followed his great relative into the drawing-room, and extended himself upon the green plush sofa, as the Minister selected the largest arm-chair, and lighted one of his huge cigars:

"What a woman ! What a voice !"

The other laughed through the fragrant smoke-rings:

"You could say no more and no less of an operatic *diva*, had you recently fallen a victim to her charms. My

landlady pleases me. My tastes, as you know, are somewhat peculiar. . . . But you need not feel anxious on the Countess's behalf. My sentiments in this instance are highly platonic." He added, smoking and speaking almost dreamily: "If in cookery Madame's performance equals her promise, what with trout, and partridges *aux petit choux*,—cold ham to fall back on, and a savoury omelette, we ought not to do badly at all ! . . . With half-a-dozen bottles of that champagne we brought from Rheims, and a little of the Epernay . . ."

He added, yawning and stretching his great limbs: "I am not usually poetical, but I have a fancy with regard to the deep blue, green-fleshed grapes of the country, that their colour affects the river into which the hillside vineyards drain. The Marne water is as brilliant and green as though it were made of melted emeralds. And the must from those grapes yields the best champagne of Rheims and Epernay. . . ." He yawned again and went on: "There is something in surroundings ! In this house I feel that I can work comfortably. The view of old trees, and bushes and flower-beds from the room I have chosen as a bedroom and study, will make one feel almost at home. Two of my servants shall sleep upstairs in the attics—of which there are several, and my coachman Niederstedt—who was my porter at the Wilhelm Strasse, shall have a shake-down somewhere below-stairs. He is as strong as Goliath and as sharp as a needle. An unusual combination of qualities, because giants are supposed by little people to be dull-witted and easily taken in !"

He sent out a long column of fragrant blue vapour and added, looking at the antique bronze clock surmounted by its grotesque bat-winged shape: "A fallacy, since I myself belong to the family of the Anakim. Do you observe that my landlady's familiar spirit appears to be winking at what I have just said ? . . . Kobold or gnome,

there is a family resemblance between his countenance and Madame's. I must get her to sell him to me, to carry home to Berlin."

LXVI.

P. C. BREAGH had gone back to his bedroom at the gardener's cottage, under the garret where had slumbered the unlucky Jean Jacques Potier. The pet rabbits of the young man were even now in a hutch in the stable-yard, and his striped house-jacket and the green baize apron he used to wear when cleaning the Tessier silver, hung on a hook in Madame Potier's closet, with the civil integuments of M. Potier, now deceased.

It was too early to go to bed. He pulled off jacket and waistcoat, filled and lighted the venerable briar-root, and sitting on his bed, re-perused by the light of his tallow candle, a letter in headings, and bearing the date of September 23rd, which may be reproduced as written, here:

288, GREAT CORAM STREET,
LONDON, W.C.

"MY DEAR YOUNG MAN!

I WAS SURPRISED AND GRATIFIED

To Receive Letters dated respectively July 28th, 31st, August 4th, 11th, 26th, Sept. 5th, 19th, from:

ONE WHO HAD VANISHED
SWALLOWED ALIVE
BY THE ROARING WHIRLPOOL OF WAR.
THEY ARE SLAP-UP AND NO MISTAKE!
ROBUST TO BRUTALITY!
THEY HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED
PUBLISHED AND PAID FOR!
BY THREE SUBURBAN EDITORS
SIMULTANEOUSLY.

A NEW IDEA
LONG CHERISHED
BY SOLOMON KNEWBIT.
A MAN BORN BEFORE HIS AGE!
THE BOSS OF A FLEET ST. WEEKLY
IS NOW NIBBLING AT.
'BANG!
A DOG'S TALE.'
Thus I Have Recovered My Fifteen Shiners And Have Cash in Hand
For My Young Swell
WHEN HE COMES MARCHING HOME!
MARIA SAYS
YOU HAD BETTER LOOK SHARP!

AN IMPORTANT CLUE
DISCOVERED!
MYSTERY OF LOST FORTUNE
ABOUT TO BE CLEARED UP!
ABSCONDING TRUSTEE
HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED IN ECCENTRIC LODGER
BY THE LANDLADY!
PROOFS IN A SEALSKIN WAISTCOAT!
BE READY!
AT ANY MOMENT THE SUMMONS MAY COME!

I remain,
My dear young man,
Truly and faithfully yours,
SOLOMON KNEWBIT."

At the bottom of the last page was written in a curious up-and-down handwriting:

"*Dr mr Breagh,*

"*yu kno How mr Knewbit Has a Way of Puting Things queer but it Wold be Best For you To Come Home it*

Realy Wold. There Is a Pore Siner only Wating To maik Amens wich Is Mind must alwais Have Bean weak and People Puting There Afares in the Hands of sutch a Trustea Can ixpect Nothing but Truble. mr Chown of Furnival's Inn is To Be let kno If He Gives Warning to Leeve the House wich i think never will Drink being got Hold of him to sutch an xtent dear mr Breagh you have thought you were Pore. But your Fortune of 7,000 lbs was only took awai by the Almighty Goodness to Be Given back again; trust and beleive. I am Dr mr Breagh,

Respectfully and afexnly
Maria Ling."

P. C. Breagh folded up the pregnant pages,—owing to Mr. Knewbit's professional predilection for capitals and spacings the double letter covered a good number—and put them away and began to think.

Would it not be best that Juliette should return to her husband in Belgium, since M. Tessier gave no sign of returning. And whether she agreed with the notion of leaving Versailles or not, was it wise of P. C. Breagh to stay ?

He loved her. He would love her always. There were times when her eyes had tenderness in them for him. Those unforgettable days passed together . . . those strange and dreadful sights seen in common, those perils mutually encountered had made a bond between them that might never be broken now.

But was it wise to remain near her, breathing her atmosphere, drinking in her rare, delicate, exquisite beauty, and growing more besotted in his worship of it with every day. He knew that it was not. By the anguish the mere thought of leaving her cost him, he realised how deeply the love of Juliette Tessier had taken root in his heart.

His nature, as simple as hers was complex, made it easy to hold her blameless in all. She had not led him on.

They had been flung together by force of circumstances. That there was something guileful in her very guilelessness never suggested itself to Breagh.

The gate-bell pealed as he sat ruminating, causing him nearly to leap out of his skin. That M. Tessier had returned was the possibility that instantly suggested itself. He knelt by the window of the low-ceiled cottage chamber and leaned out into the deepening dusk.

German voices at the gate, the stamping of horses, and the clinking of bridles. . . . The grinding of heavy boots on gravel, the jingle of spurs and the sound of scabbards scraping against the ground, rapping against the steps. A pause and a voice he knew said clearly and resonantly:

"The Herr Intendant General may spare himself the trouble. I will interview the people of the house myself!"

A loud voice barked out something unintelligible to the listener, ending with "insolence." The voice of the Man of Iron returned:

"In that case my Excellency will take the risk. There are only women in the house, and should they offer violence, I have Count Hatzfeldt and Count Bismarck-Bohlen here."

If there were any further words the listener missed them, so deafeningly loud was the drumming of the blood in his ears. . . . The door was opened. There was a gleam of something white in the dusky hall-places. And *He* entered and the other men followed him. . . . What did they there? What was it best to do? . . .

Now one by one the upper rooms were illuminated. The house-door was opening. Two men came out and descended the steps. One who walked lightly and hummed a tune between the whiffs of his cigar, passed away, still humming, towards the Avenue St. Cloud. The second who trailed a clanking sword, gave harsh-voiced orders n the staccato tone of Prussian military authority to some persons in the street outside, mounted a charger held by

an orderly and rode jingling away towards the Boulevard de la Reine. His helmet and his orderly's could be seen bobbing over the top of the wall that screened the Tessier house from the Rue de Provence, and the dark silhouettes of the heads and bodies of men who crowded the double box-seats of two private luggage-vans that waited beyond the *porte cochère* under an escort of cavalry. No doubt they were *fourgons* sacred to the travelling Foreign Office of the Minister, bearing besides the material of diplomatic labour, a working staff of Chancery clerks. Other vehicles were waiting, and videttes of cavalry were posted at each end of the quiet street. The trampling of their horses could be heard distinctly, with certain gruff admonitions, presumably addressed to pedestrians desirous of using the thoroughfare.

Now the leaves of the *porte cochère* were being opened and hooked back by the dusky silhouettes of a couple of men. Liveried grooms, because of stray gleams of light flashed back from buttons and cockades. Light thrown by the blazing yellow lamps of a large, empty, travelling-landau that rolled in under the lozenged archway, at the heels of a splendid pair. The horses smelt of dust and sweat, and whinnied as they whiffed the stables. They were driven by a huge coachman, and a second carriage followed, piled with luggage, and containing three persons, who might have been secretaries or body-servants, one could not decide. Four led horses followed, guided by orderlies of Cuirassiers. These did not follow the carriages, as they turned up the short avenue and pulled up at the hall-door. The orderlies, quite as though they knew the place, rode down the longer gravel drive that ended at the gates of the stable-yard. One trooper got down and opened the gates, and the eager horses were conducted in.

Tramp, tramp, tramp ! . . .

A detachment of infantry, marching down the Rue de Provence. Turning in under the archway of the carriage-entrance, an eighth-company belonging to a regiment impossible to specify, because of the enfolding, deepening dusk. They also smelt hot and dusty and tallowy. A subaltern was in command of them, and an under-officer. They halted, marked time while they posted a sentry at each of the gates, then tramped on towards the gardener's cottage, and turned into the Tessier stableyard. They were going to bivouac there. It was all clear and plain and simple. It was as fascinating as a shadow-play—but for the tragic element that mingled in. Now the servants and grooms were unloading the luggage from the carriages, and marvellously deft and noiseless they seemed at the work. A little later—and both carriages turned from the house, and were driven into the stable-yard. You could hear the grooms and the big coachman hissing as they unharnessed the weary horses, and the horses snorting recognition as they scented their stable-mates. And then P. C. Breagh became aware that the venerable pair of ponies that drew Madame Tessier's basket-carriage, were not to be permitted to remain in their comfortable loose-boxes. . . . He could hear the elderly man who groomed and fed and exercised the ponies, vainly protesting at the summary eviction of his charges, and the officer who commanded the detachment of infantry—Green Rifles, as it turned out—answering his complaints:

"Find the beasts another stable and the rent and forage will be paid for. But remember!—if you grumble, His Excellency will have you shot!"

And the ponies were led away in search of new quarters, as the Foreign Office *fourgon,* with its escort of Uhlans, ground over the trampled gravel and pulled up at the terrace-steps. One could hear the voice of Madame Potier and the creaking of the Venetian shutters. Then

the billiard-room windows threw broad stripes of light across the terrace towards the wall. They were going to carry in the despatch-boxes and light travelling-safes, the copying-presses and letter-books and the rest of the Foreign Office impedimenta by way of the long windows.... One guessed whose idea that had been.

A dominating, transforming spirit had invaded the quiet house in the Rue de Provence, bringing with it this purposeful, orderly bustle, this disciplined irruption of elements strange and new.

Of all these servants and attendants, some would certainly take up their abode at the gardener's cottage. Would P. C. Breagh, like the Tessier ponies, be presently turned out to seek cover elsewhere ?

And Juliette. . . . The thought of her roused all his stinging apprehensions. He told himself that presently, when the house should have resumed something of its normal quiet, he would steal across the lawn in the shadow of the trees and borders, and lie in wait for a glance . . . for a word....

He would force her to leave at once for Belgium. She must not remain in the house with all these men.... The time crept by with maddening slowness as he waited. Dark shadows moved in lighted rooms, passing across the blinded windows.... The whole house was flaring with gaslight now.

How long.... The slatted Venetian shutters of the dining-room were now unbarred and thrown open. He could not see into the room by reason that it faced east towards the pleasaunce, while the window from which he watched looked southwards, immediately commanding the hall-door. But broad beams of light were thrown down the steps and across the grass-plot. Tall shadows moved across the streaks at intervals. There was the clatter of china, glass and cutlery, a smell of cooking

delectably savoury. The Man of Iron was dining, and Hate had spread the board.

A shudder went through Breagh, and a cold perspiration bathed him. His hair seemed to rise and stiffen upon his creeping scalp. A sound broke from him . . . perhaps a groan, perhaps an exclamation. There was a soft step in the darkness under his window and a whisper like a sigh.

"Monsieur Breagh. . . . Do not descend! It will be better that I mount the stairs to you!"

His first impulse was to reassume the discarded coat and waistcoat. Then he remembered that it was dark. The floor creaked under his stealthy footsteps as he reached the landing and crept on stockinged feet down the narrow stairway. She had pushed back the unlatched door and passed into the tiny passage. He met her almost on the threshold, felt for, and seized her little hands. How feverishly hot they were. He pressed them as he whispered:

"I guessed what had happened! . . . I know who has come here! . . . For hours I have been waiting my chance to get a word alone with you. I was just coming when I heard you under the window!"

She whispered—and although her hands burned in his, they trembled and her teeth chattered:

"Monseigneur de Bismarck desired to dine here. Every day one does not entertain a guest so noble. See you well! I have cooked for Monseigneur with my own hands a dinner worthy of—himself! He has devoured like an ogre the trout *à la sauce Tartare,* and the cutlets, and is now engaged upon a *ragoût* of partridges. When it is time to fry the savoury omelette that follows, Madame Potier will ring the little bell, and I shall run back to the house."

The sentence ended in a stifled titter. An ugly sound that sickened Breagh as he heard it. He pressed the small hands, whispering entreatingly:

"Don't laugh! You must not laugh. Go back and get what you need for a journey. Tell Madame Potier I am taking you to Belgium. Back to your husband! . . . your place is where he is! You shall not stay here . . . you must not, I forbid you! . . ."

She ceased to laugh and pulled her hands away from his. Her answer came; an inflexible utterance to be breathed so softly:

"I remain here, Monsieur, until my husband comes!"

He panted the old prayer:

"Juliette, for the love of God . . .! You don't know what terrible danger you are risking! . . ."

The reply fanned past his cheek like the velvety wing of some great night-moth.

"Monsieur, I remain here, until the arrival of M. Charles Tessier. Although you will do wisely to depart while you may, unseen!"

He said between his gritted teeth, while the pounding of his heart choked him.

"I shall stay here! . . . I decline to be sent away! . . ."

She seemed to cogitate. Then came the mere breath of an utterance.

"Will you swear to be secret and faithful?"

He said hoarsely:

"Juliette, I must first know what you intend to do?"

She whispered, and her voice set his blood rushing and the fragrance of her maddened him.

"Stoop! . . . Why are you so tall? Bend down your head!"

He stooped from his majestic altitude of five feet nine inches and a bittock, and two little hands that scorched him clasped his neck about. Light and soft as the touch of a flower was the contact of the mouth that whispered:

"I will tell you. . . . There is a line of one of your English poets—I forget his name—but the words run like this . . . :

"'*Throw but a stone—the giant dies!*"

He gasped:

"I hear you!"

She whispered, still with her mouth against his cheek:

"See you well!—for the deliverance of my country, it is I who am going to throw that stone!"

He panted through the shuddering that had seized him:

"Do you know what will happen, whether you succeed or fail? You will be led out—placed with your back against—this wall perhaps!—and shot!"

He felt her lips smile against his cheek as she answered:

"And what of that! It will be the fortune of War! But you . . ." She sharply drew her face away, and the slight hands thrust him from her. "I will have you leave this place to-night!"

A weakness seized him. He sank down upon his knees and stretched his arms out, in the darkness, to the dimly outlined silhouette of the slight elfin creature standing on the threshold, and the scents of rose and jasmine came to him in gusts from the night-veiled garden with another fragrance that had no name. He whispered, driven beyond himself:

"I will not go! I love you!"

She said:

"I have nothing to do with Love—who have consecrated myself to vengeance. And your presence here might ruin all. . . . *He* knows M. Breagh, the Englishman. . . . Have you not told me over and over, that once he . . ."

She broke off there. But the intolerable stab brought Breagh to his feet. He snarled at her through his clenched teeth.

"He may know Breagh, the Englishman, but he doesn't

know Jean Jacques Potier. Tell Madame that I shall wear her nephew's clothes and take his name, and do his work about the house and garden. All his duds are in the cupboard up in my room there, and his apron and clogs and so forth. . . ."

Appalling triviality of the sex feminine. The conjured picture evoked a titter. She breathed, and he was stung with rage to know her shaken with irresistible mirth:

"But you do not know how to sweep and clean, and how can you conceal your very red and curly hair? French servant-men have not such hair! You will be betrayed by it, Monsieur! . . ."

His blood boiled, and he thundered in a whisper:

"I shan't! . . . Call it what colour you like to-night. It won't be there to-morrow! There are clippers in the cupboard, and I shall have it off."

A distant bell rang. She was gone like a bat in the darkness. His word was given. He was pledged now to follow her wherever Fate should lead.

LXVII.

VERSAILLES, always a town of martial music, Royal or Imperial fanfares of brass, and welcoming salutes of deep-voiced cannon, had been—since a day early in October, when the girdle of iron and steel had closed about Paris,—resonant with Prussian bugle-calls and throbbing with Prussian drums.

From dusk to dawn the electric search-ray now mounted on the summit of the Arc de Triomphe, as the broad wheeling beams from Vanves, Issy, Mont Valérien, and the whole ring of forts that guarded the great, magnificent, menaced capital, whitened earth and sky in token of the

unsleeping vigilance of the Parisians, and their ceaseless expectation of a German night-attack, even as the long indicatory fingers of brilliant blue-white light, stretching from the ridge of St. Cloud and from the heights of Clamart, from Marly, Vanesse, Épinal, Noiseau, Choisy, and Bourget—no less than the formidable battery of big guns on the Place d'Armes, with their muzzles placed so as to sweep the avenues radiating from the Château,—betokened the invaders' anticipations of yet another sortie.

Ah, why had there been no sortie earlier than that abortive effort towards Chevilly on the thirtieth of September ? There were, at the beginning of the Investment, no more than 180,000 German troops of the Crown Prince's Army encircling Paris. Up to the tenth of October what a triumphant turning of the tables might have been effected by a vigorous sally, effectively carried out.

Huge German forces were engaged in the sieges of Metz and Strassburg, Belfort and Soissons, Schelsstadt and Verdun. General von der Tann was engaged with the Army of the Loire near Artenay. The stubborn resistance of Orleans kept an Army Corps of the Red Prince extremely busy. The Grand Duke of Mecklenburg, with the right wing of the Prussians' covering army south of Paris, was actively engaged with the French at Dreux and Le Mans.

And there were 55,000 troops of the Line within the walls of Paris, there were 105,000 Mobiles—not fighters to be despised. There were 300,000 National Guards—perhaps too soft in muscle and well-developed in the region of the corporation to be very effective,—pitted against such seasoned warriors as Schmidt, Klaus, Kraus and Klein. But add to these, 25,000 Marines, Douaniers, Gardes-Champêtres and Forestiers, and there you had a force of 485,000 trained Frenchmen, asking nothing better than to sally out by St. Denis, Villejuif and Charenton, cut the

line of investment north, clear the blocked road south, effect a junction with the Army of the Loire, destroy the Warlock's subtlest combinations, promptly raise the Siege of Paris, and deliver France from the invader.

What was Trochu, Military Governor of Paris, thinking about ? What were MM. Ducrot and Vinoy doing, to delay until the garrison and fortress of Strassburg were surrendered, until the Capitulation of Metz on the twenty-seventh of October, and the fall of Verdun on the seventh of November, had released the main Army of the Red Prince for the strengthening of that steel and iron girdle that lay outside the defiant ring of forts ? The tentative sally of the twenty-ninth of November was foredoomed to failure from the outset. No wonder Trochu and his plans furnished hungry Parisians with abundant food for mockery, when the Spectre of Famine brooded over the City on the Seine. Narrow-eyed, and tight-lipped, cold, sinister, and mysterious, the man was a mere bag of wind, when all was said and done.

Meanwhile the great bronze muzzle-loaders of the Forts of Mont Valérien, Issy, Montrouge, Vanves and Charenton, St. Denis and its twin sisters, roared at intervals throughout each day, raining common shell, chain-shot, solid ball and shrapnel into the lines of the investing host. But the trenching and battery-making went on steadily: the high-walled farmyards and gardens of country-houses in the environs were being converted into emplacements for artillery of the largest calibre. Already several of Krupp's stupendous siege-howitzers, with muzzles cocked at angles of forty-five, demonstrated the possibilities of the bombardment for which the German Press daily shrieked.

"*Not for the reduction of the military defences, but to produce by the exercise of sheer terror, bodily suffering, and destruction of private property, such an effect upon the unarmed multitudes—subjected to a hail of incendiary shells*

within their encircling ring of walls and fortresses—as to compel the chiefs of the Government and garrison to come to terms at command of the popular voice."

Thus the leader-writers of the *Berliner Zeitung* and other journals, peaceful-looking, stout men, with full beards and short-sighted eyes behind spectacles, wrote, as though they longed to dip their quills in newly-shed French blood.

"It is sad, very sad," said the Warlock, vexed for once, "that the siege-trains conveying more than 100,000 hundredweights of ammunition cannot be brought over a single line of rails with sufficient quickness to gratify these excellent gentlemen. . . . Yet for the present we can do no more than invest the place and wait for the means of attacking it. The process of starving out is, as the mighty fortress of Metz has shown, a very slow one. But as the loud voices of one hundred and one guns have already proclaimed to our Berliners—the empty stomach triumphs over the most obstinate resistance. We now require an army to guard 300,000 prisoners of War! Since the Babylonian Captivity the world has not heard the like! And yet the chamber-prattlers and the journalists accuse us of tardiness. Already from several anonymous quarters have reproachful or ridiculing letters reached me. One even contains a villainous comic verse, which I am told is sung in the music-halls in Berlin."

And the great tactician read, with the expression of one who savours the bouquet of sulphuretted hydrogen or assafœtida:

> "*Guter Moltke, gehst so stumm?*
> *Immer um das Ding herum:*
> *Bester Moltke, sei nicht dumm,*
> *Mach' doch endlich: Bumm, bumm, bumm!*"

And he tore up the rude verses in indignation and threw them into the waste-paper basket of the Prussian Great Headquarters at the Palais de Justice, on the right of the

Prefecture, and strode downstairs, too much out of tune to hum.

To have been called slow and stupid, and affectionately urged to hurry up and make an end of things with bang, bang, banging. . . . He was almost glad that his departed Mary was not alive to know of the humiliation inflicted by those scurrilous rhymesters on her beloved old man.

It was an unfortunate moment chosen by a new junior assistant *aide-de-camp* upon the Chieftain's personal staff, for tendering a request for leave of absence until the following day.

"What, what? . . . You have barely entered upon your new and important duties, the wine in which your comrades of the Guard pledged you is still bubbling in your veins. . . . Is it another congratulatory banquet, or a supper *tête-à-tête?* . . . Am I right?" The Warlock's keen glance glittered between his lashless eyelids at the tall, fair-headed young officer standing rigidly before him. "*Prut!* that reminds me! . . ." he added. "In whose company did I see you lunching only yesterday at one of the little round tables in the ante-chamber of the dining-salle at the Hôtel des Réservoirs?"

Said Valverden, his blue eyes meeting the sharp gray glance with a charming candour:

"Excellency, the lady is the recently-married wife of a Roumanian noble. Her name, if Your Excellency desires to know it, is Madame de Straz."

Said the Field-Marshal with an acute look and a dry intonation:

"In Berlin, not so long ago, she called herself something else!"

Valverden answered, with a conscious side-glance at the twist of silver braid that marked his rank of Captain:

"Her first husband was killed in action with his regiment at Gravelotte. She is now legally married to M. de Straz."

Moltke took snuff and said laconically:

"She has not taken long in changing her state."

Valverden began, rather lamely:

"Madame had virtually been separated from M. de Bayard——"

Like a bayonet-thrust came the retort:

"Since your Cousin Max ran away with her from Paris, fourteen years ago! The woman is an adventuress, whom you will be wise to avoid."

Valverden answered with his disarming look of frankness:

"Your Excellency, I was applied to by the person you mention, for advice in a matter of serious urgency. Madame de Straz has unhappily lost all trace of the whereabouts of her daughter, Mademoiselle de Bayard. . . . She has entreated me to solicit for her an audience with Your Excellency, in the hope that you might aid her to recover the young girl."

The War Eagle croaked, ruffling his feathers with indignation:

"Does the woman suppose that I have got the unfortunate young creature in my pocket? Or does she suspect you of knowing where she is to be found?"

Valverden said, hastily and flushing:

"Your Excellency, upon my honour, I have never seen the girl!"

The Warlock tucked away his snuff-box and pointed the terrible withered finger at the left side of the young man's bosom, where hung upon a broad black, white-bordered ribbon a cross of dark metal, edged with a narrow line of silver, and bearing a crown and the letter "W." A terrible grating voice said, and with all his cool effrontery Valverden quailed at the words and the stern look that accompanied them:

"To you, young man, upon whom the Second Class of

the Iron Cross has been conferred by the hand of your Crown Prince, for daring and gallantry upon the war-field—no more I say than this! Do nothing to disgrace the wearer of that decoration—which should be sacred in your eyes. . . ." He added: "The leave you ask is granted. Until twelve noon to-morrow, Captain von Herding will take your place."

And His Excellency the Field-Marshal returned his *aide-de-camp's* salute and wheeled sharply, and had taken a couple of strides across the vestibule, when he halted to ask:

"This girl you speak of—how came she lost? . . ."

Said Valverden, hesitating slightly:

"According to Madame her mother, the ladies were on a visit to Rethel during the time when the Prince Imperial of the French was staying at the Prefecture. They had obtained an audience of the Prince. . . . Madame de Straz was prevented by illness from accompanying her daughter. . . . The young lady—Mademoiselle Juliette de Bayard—has never been seen since!"

The lean neck and spare features of the greatest of strategists became suffused with indignant scarlet. He said:

"The mother is a trollop of the very first water. She took the girl to the Prefecture—why did she contrive an interview? She sends her up alone—she declares that she has never since seen her. . . . *Pfui!* . . . The affair, in my nostrils, fairly stinks of vulgar intrigue. Have no more to do with it,—though the unlucky girl is no doubt to be pitied. . . . I will speak to His Excellency, Count Bismarck, who has agents in Rethel."

And he steamed across the marble vestibule of the great hall of the Palais de Justice, crossed the Place des Tribunaux, and vanished into the Prefecture, over whose entrance hung the Hohenzollern banner and the Prussian

standard, that was very soon to show a stripe of red beside the black and white. . . .

For the hitherto recalcitrant States of Baden and Hesse had joined the Bund. The King of Saxony had signed,—Würtemberg would sign the treaty of Federation shortly. There were prospects of a definite settlement with the King of Bavaria. The ambition of the Man of Iron was shortly to be realised. . . . Bismarck was to rule a German Emperor.

You might have seen him, upon this bland November morning that had succeeded a night of shrieking northerly gusts and driving pelts of sleety rain, walking with the Count Hatzfeldt in the garden of the Tessier mansion in the Rue de Provence.

The house immediately opposite had now been converted into a guard-post. Sentries in the uniforms of the Green Jaegers were on duty at the gates. Over the principal entrance hung the black and white Prussian standard. The sky was deep blue, with argosies of white clouds sailing towards the north-east. The leaves that yet remained upon the elms and poplars shone in the sunshine like gold newly-minted. Those that the gale had stripped lay in wet drifts upon the grass and gravel, though the three oak-trees in the pleasaunce yet retained their suits of crisping russet-brown.

To the right, at the rear of the house, a young man-servant was sweeping away the leaves that adhered to the narrow terrace of steps running round three sides of the building. The swish of his birch-broom punctuated the sentences of the newspaper-article being read by Hatzfeldt to his Chief.

It was the continuation of the article in the *Berliner Zeitung* that had roused the ire of the Warlock a little while before.

"Unanimously," it concluded, "and in the interests of Humanity, we demand that this measure be taken at once. We reprehend in the sternest terms, not only those military commanders who are in favour of procrastination. We cry in the ears of the Chancellor-and-Minister-President Count Bismarck himself, who is credited with being the main factor in this policy of delay: *Mene, mene, tekel upharsin!*—'Thou art weighed in the balance, and found to want!'"

Said the Man of Iron to Hatzfeldt:

"Did I not know that my wife regards women who enter the lists of journalism as unsexed, and outcasts beyond the hope of redemption, I should be inclined to believe she had written this. I have often before now been accused of inhumanity, but to be reproached for an excess of tenderness is something quite new to me. How shall we reassure these excitable gentlemen? Buschlein"—he referred to his Press article-writer, the rotund author of the famous "Recollections"—"Buschlein shall write that he has authority from Count Bismarck to state that his universally-credited predilections for slaughter have not been blunted by recent experiences, and that he much approves of the bombardment-idea, but that he has no control over those high military functionaries who command His Majesty's investing forces, and is not accustomed to be consulted by them."

He spat, and resumed:

"Private correspondents worry me to know whether I am really averse to the bombardment, and why I won't allow firing into the town? What pernicious rubbish! They will be blaming me next for all losses during the investment. Which are not small; for in little skirmishes, and during the short time occupied by those abortive sorties, we have lost more troops than we should have done had we regularly stormed the place."

He added, looking humorously at Hatzfeldt, whose handsome, *débonnaire* countenance invariably fell at any reference to a bombardment:

"By the way, another balloon has been taken with letters from Paris, some of which I have already read, and a *Figaro* of yesterday's date. It has been decreed by the French Government that all wine and provisions are to be taken away from private people, as the poorer classes have already begun to fricassee their dogs and cats. So your American father-in-law will have to look out for his cellar — an excellently stocked one, as I have heard from you. And your wife's famous mouse-gray ponies will probably be made into cutlets—a pretty piece of intelligence for your next letter to Madame!"

"Ah! . . . for Heaven's sake, Your Excellency!" cried Hatzfeldt, with ruefully-elevated eyebrows, "I implore you not to conjure up the image of my wife's indignation and despair. Every letter I receive from her begins and ends with her precious ponies."

The Minister appended:

"Her mother, father, and her brother Henry, who is living at their estate of Petit Val, near Marly,—I think you told me,—being sandwiched in between the little beasts."

They were pacing the garden-paths. The Chancellor had recently risen, and seemed inclined to be in a jesting mood. He continued, throwing away the butt of a finished cigar:

"I must be careful, or the Countess will send me no more *pâté* of pheasants, or sausages. Pray tell her, with my compliments, that both were excellently fresh and good. . . . Did you notice written on my table-card that the Mayor of Versailles is to have a ten-minute interview before M. Thiers arrives at half-past twelve? If I have not polished off the Republican official before Thiers toddles up the doorsteps with his portfolio under his short arm, and his gold spectacles twinkling, engage him in con-

versation below here for an instant—do not send him up straightway to the torture-cell." Thus the Minister had christened the small room adjoining his private apartment. He went on: "I do not want him to go down to Sèvres with his white flag and his escort, and meet Jules Favre with a string of tales about our orgies and revellings, of the enormous expense of which the Mayor is coming to complain."

"What insolence!" commented Hatzfeldt.

"It seems," continued the Minister, "that we all cost the town too much to keep, the chief offenders being the grand-ducal and princely personages at the Hôtel des Réservoirs. Of course, one knows that the Tinsel Rabble eat and drink a great deal more than they require, and waste much more than they consume. But to a Frenchman, one cannot admit as much. So I shall tell the Mayor that he must apply to the French Government at Tours for permission to raise a substantial money-loan, and as M. Thiers has only just come from there, he would naturally buttonhole the old gentleman if he encountered him. Which,—as our plump, neatly shaved old Professor is as timid as a hare and as soft as a baby,—would discompose him horribly. . ." He continued: "He is dying to make peace with us, because there will soon be famine in Paris. Imagine how I caught him out when I told him yesterday: '*Monsieur, you have only visited the city for a few hours. We know better about the contents of its magazines than you do. They have ample provisions to last until the end of January. . . .*' What a look of incredulity! I had only been feeling his pulse, as it were. . . . His amazement told me what I most wanted to know. What a man to make a bargain about an armistice, an invalidy civilian, who cannot conceal his feelings! Who lets himself be put out of countenance and pumped!—actually pumped!"

He turned aside to cough and hawk and expectorate

copiously. . . . "There !" he said, wiping his moustache vigorously with a large white cambric handkerchief, " you see what it is to have a stomach as sensitive as mine is. . . . That injustice done me in the *Berliner Zeitung* with reference to the bombardment has caused an overflow of bile, by which I was already incommoded. Thiers will be certain to remain closeted with me for two hours. He is nothing if not expansive and flowery, and redundant. I shall not be able to get on horseback before three o'clock, and we dine at six." He went on, punctuating the sentence with more coughs and hawkings: " And as our table is to be graced—*tchah !*—by a huge trout pasty, a love-gift to the Chancellor of the—*hah !*—Confederation, from a Berlin restaurant-keeper who throws into the bargain—*ahah !*—a cask of Vienna March beer and his photograph, taken with his wife and—*brr'r !*"

He turned aside and spat vigorously, before ending, resuming, as he used the big white handkerchief:

" One would desire to do justice to a gift so welcome. . . . More bile ! . . . I spat like this half the night through. . . . Decidedly I am not as well as when we galloped along the high-roads with the Great Headquarters Staff. . . . I have wondered: Do I eat too much ? Does this sedentary life conduce to indigestion ?" He spat again and answered himself: " How can it be so, when I breakfast on a couple of eggs with dry toast, and a cup of tea without milk? I don't lunch—lunch is a mockery of a meal—but in the evening I make a hearty dinner. With beer and champagne in plenty, and wash all down with half-a-dozen cups of tea. Then I go to bed—as you know, never before midnight. There's a doze—and I waken up with my brain as bright as daylight—all sorts of things running through it, and my mouth full of this bitter—*faugh !*"

" Your Excellency will need a fresh handkerchief," said Hatzfeldt, slightly shuddering, as the Chancellor vigorously

crumpled the soiled cambric into a ball. "Shall I send Your Excellency's servant to fetch another ?"

"No, no ! As it happens, I have sent Grams out. And Engelberg is busy. There is Madame Charles's factotum !" He called in French: "*Hola*, Jean Jacques ! Approach, my brave young man !"

His full blue eyes, their whites now red-veined and biliously injected, had turned to where the strongly-built young male servant was still sweeping the steps of the rear of the house. Cropped to the scalp, you saw the fellow attired in a well-worn morning jacket of striped linen, a blue waistcoat and tight blue cloth trousers, yellow-piped at the side seams. Summoned by an imperative word and gesture, he knocked the damp leaves off his broom, stood it up against the side of the conservatory, and shambled to where the Chancellor was standing, muttering with a downcast air and a furtive, sulky look:

"*Ouiche, Monseigneur ?* . . . What is it Monseigneur desires ?"

Said the Minister, with a smile that curved the great moustache and showed the white, square teeth that a young man might have envied:

"Monseigneur desires that without delay the brave Jean Jacques would betake him to the kitchen, and desire Madame Charles Tessier of her goodness to favour Monseigneur with a clean handkerchief. . . . Perhaps two would be better. . . . Ask for two, Jean Jacques, and compel thy legs to rapid motion, for to *croquer le marmot* is not a favourite pastime with Monseigneur ! Comprehend you ?"

Jean Jacques replied in his extraordinary patois, with a bow of the clumsiest:

"*Ouiche, Monseigneur !*"

"*De quel pays êtes-vous ?*" asked Hatzfeldt curiously.

Jean Jacques responded with sulky unwillingness:

"*La Suisse, Monsieur!*"

Hatzfeldt said, as the young man returned to the scene of his abandoned labours, picked up his broom, and went round the end of the conservatory towards the kitchen quarters:

"There are Frenchmen who call themselves Belgians or Swiss because they are too funky to fight!"

Said the Minister:

"Madame Charles Tessier, who knows all about this fellow, describes him as a native of Neufchâtel. Here she comes herself, bringing my handkerchiefs. Thank you a thousand times, Madame! But why inconvenience yourself?"

Madame Charles, whose black hair, heavily streaked with white, was crowned with a dreadful lace cap with lappets, parted in the middle, and brushed down in two old-fashioned festoons on either side of her haggard white wedge of a face, shrilled in her raucous voice that it was no trouble whatever. . . . The laundress's basket with Monseigneur's clean linen had but that moment come in.

Madame Charles wore a gray poplin gown of rich, stiff, antique material, trimmed with black gimp upon the gores, round the bottom of the expansive skirt, and upon the sleeves and waist. It had been discovered in a wardrobe belonging to the mother of M. Charles Tessier. She had on one of Madame's black silk aprons, a pair of her black silk mittens, and the black chenille net adorned with steel beads that confined her back hair had housed the iron-gray curls of her respected mother-in-law. Over her narrow shoulders hung the inevitable white woollen shawl.

She curtsied deeply to the Chancellor and slightly to Count Hatzfeldt, and went on into the garden, and disappeared round the corner of the ivy-bordered path. Seen thus in the searching daylight, the elevation and forward thrust of the left shoulder, that lent her gait its

unpleasant peculiarity, and the curvature in the lower part of the spine were even more painfully apparent. It occurred to her as she moved away from the two men, whose eyes, reluctantly or curiously, were following her, that to ape this deformity so persistently might be to bring it in reality upon herself.

She shivered a little, despite the bland warmth of the November sunshine. Round the corner of the green glass conservatory, well out of sight of those who walked in the garden, Jean Jacques Potier was shivering too.

When the Chancellor had coughed and spat and spat again, the knees of Jean Jacques had shaken beneath him. His heart had sunk like a leaden plummet, and the sweat of terror had started on his skin.

He was afraid—horribly afraid. Not for himself, but for another. There was no knowing. The thing he feared might happen at any time.

"*Throw but a stone, the giant dies! . . .*"

He could hear now, the very voice in which she had added: "See you well, it is I who am going to throw that stone!"

He had expended all the eloquence he possessed with the object of turning Juliette from her purpose. He did not know whether he had succeeded. She would give him no promise. She was sphinxlike, inscrutable. . . . You could never feel sure that in the middle of the night there would not be a cry—and then a commotion of running feet upon the stairs, and then—the arrest, and the accusation. He had made up his mind to say, when that happened: "*It was my doing. She knew nothing about it. It was I who put poison in the food of this man!*"

Then he would be taken out and shot. It would be done instantly, whether the owner of the life that had been attempted died or got well. Perhaps the man would not

die ? He had an iron constitution and the frame of a Titan. But sometimes he looked weary and haggard and bilious. And when he spat as just now, and pulled wry mouths over the bitter stuff he expectorated, the heart of P. C. Breagh would sink to the pit of his stomach, and his legs would shake under him, as they were shaking now.

LXVIII.

Meanwhile the Man of Iron had commented to Hatzfeldt:

" Our landlady is going for a little promenade . . . she does not fear damp, that is quite plain . . . see how she trails her skirts over the wet grass. Now, if she were to show her feet, should we be grateful, or the reverse ?"

A light of cynical amusement flickered in his blue eyes as he noted Hatzfeldt's disgust of the creature of whom he spoke. He went on:

" Ugly women have sometimes pretty feet and hands that are exquisite. Have you ever looked closely at the hands of Madame Charles ? If not, I recommend them to your notice. They are well worth looking at." He added, ignoring the shudder that convulsed the dandy: " I propose that we follow her—discreetly and at a distance. I have still a few minutes before the Mayor arrives."

He led the way. They crossed a portion of the lawn and turned into a gravel-walk, damp and miry and drifted over with wet and rotting leaves. The shining patent-leather boots of Hatzfeldt suffered by their contact. The Chancellor, observing this, said:

" Never mind. . . . You can have them cleaned ! My man Niederstedt polishes boots capitally !"

Hatzfeldt returned plaintively:

" I can have them cleaned, as Your Excellency observes.

But never again will they be the same after a wetting. And they are made by the only man in the world who knows how to make boots."

The Minister said brutally:

"Order another pair of the fellow!"

Hatzfeldt returned with a shrug and a rueful look:

"He lives in Paris—Rue de Lafayette. And Your Excellency is going to have Paris bombarded!"

Said Bismarck, his great frame shaken by internal laughter:

"The fellows who write the newspaper articles out of their own heads know a great deal better than that. . . . According to them I am a humanitarian—altruistic to imbecility."

"But we, who only write to Your Excellency's dictation, know Your Excellency better than they!"

The injury to his immaculate foot-coverings, and the impending destruction of his bootmaker's establishment, incensed Hatzfeldt to the point of an imprudent retort.

The granite face turned. The heavy regard rested upon him. With his characteristic stutter—a signal as warning to those who knew him as the rattle of the *crotalus* hidden in the brake, the Minister said:

"So I am not a philanthropist, or a—or an apostle of light and sweetness. I would prefer to build an Empire with the fallen towers of the modern Babylon? . . ."

Hatzfeldt bowed with the grace inherited from the Russian Princess, his mother. The Minister went on in a lighter tone:

"As a boy I always preferred the apples that hung on the highest branches. They were bigger and sweeter and rosier than the others, though in stealing them I risked both my breeches and my neck. Well! To be plain, there are two apples just now that I particularly covet. The Bombardment—and the Proclamation of the Emperor of Germany

from the Tuileries. . . ." He added: "The *via media* is not the surest road to an arrangement that shall be lasting. The most convincing arguments are uttered by the iron mouths of big guns !"

They had emerged from the shrubbery at the bottom of the garden. The patch of green still spread upon the eastern boundary wall, where the water trickled down. The aquatic plants had been weeded, and the tiny pond cleaned out by Breagh under the supervision of his Infanta, but the pipe remained unsoldered because the plumber's men had gone to the War. Thus the Satyr's mouth remained dry, though the chuckle still sounded in the Satyr's throat.

Madame Charles had been standing near the mask as the Minister and his courtly First Secretary stepped into the open. She started slightly, glanced round, bent her head, and limped painfully away.

Said the Chancellor, barely glancing after the awkward, misshapen figure:

" I hope that it has not occurred to Madame Charles to look over the garden wall !"

Hatzfeldt's eyebrows went up in mild surprise. He objected:

" It would hardly be possible. The wall must be eight feet high, and how in the world could a woman, elderly, and with that distressing deformity——"

The laugh that shook the great figure beside him, puzzled as much as the utterance.

" She is a daughter of Eve—and it would be possible, by putting a toe in the jaws of yonder grinning gentleman, to ascertain that I have had two sentries posted on the other side of this wall ! Listen ! . . ."

He rapped on the masonry with the walking-stick he habitually carried, and an answering rap came from the other side.

"There is a good large garden there, belonging to an unoccupied house," he added. "And ranged along the wall are bushes, behind which my two men stand well screened."

"Did Your Excellency apprehend danger from that quarter?" inquired Hatzfeldt.

"Hardly," said he, "though it is as well to be on the safe side, and Versailles is pretty well packed with people by whom I am rather particularly detested. But as a fact, I placed the soldiers for the purpose of catching Madame's postman. You did not perceive as we stepped out of the shrubbery that she slipped an envelope into this creature's mouth?"

Hatzfeldt answered, in some astonishment:

"Why, no, Your Excellency. I saw nothing of the kind!"

The Minister said, shaken with the internal, secret laughter:

"And yet you have good eyes, better than mine for seeing some things at a distance. . . . A pretty face behind a thick veil . . . a graceful figure concealed by a shawl. Possibly the friend who communicates with Madame Charles with the aid of this grinning fellow, admires her. . . . There is no accounting for tastes. . . ."

Hatzfeldt asked in a tone of disgust:

"Who is Madame Charles's friend? Is it possible that misshapen creature has a lover?"

The Minister answered with a curious grimace:

"A lover who is apparently a *Franc-tireur*."

Hatzfeldt returned with acrimony:

"One of those marauding free-shooters who wear a black cloth uniform, and carry a black standard with a skull above a pair of crossbones. Perhaps his lady-love sat for the picture of the Death's head?"

The Minister returned, with a look of amusement:

"Possibly she did. . . . Though, there have been moments when, under Madame's extraordinary coiffure with the black lace lappets, I have seen peeping at me—imagine what ?"

"I cannot imagine. . . . Hatred, possibly ?" said Hatzfeldt.

"Hatred, blazing from two extraordinarily blue eyes. . . ." The Minister went on: "But not only hatred. . . . Youth, and prettiness. Now, look here, and—for I am perfectly convinced that you believe me bewitched by our landlady, —behold my rival's *billet-doux*. . . ."

Hatzfeldt could scarcely speak for laughter. The Minister put his hand into the Satyr's mouth and extracted therefrom a little envelope, inscribed in a bold, black, inky scrawl.

"*To My Adored Wife.*"

The Satyr chuckled almost humanly as the Minister held the superscription under his Secretary's eyes, and calmly proceeded to open the envelope. Hatzfeldt, at first crimson, and writhing with repressed merriment, became graver as the Minister read aloud:

"*What of thy husband? dost thou ask in the nights that are sleepless and solitary. Credit, my little one, that thy Charles is often near. In the thought of thy husband, if not in person, he rests upon thy heart so faithful and fond.*"

Hatzfeldt spluttered. The reader continued:

"*We Francs-tireurs attacked a squadron of Schleswig Hussars the other day at the village of Hably. . . . We shot down many of the Prussian marauders and killed their horses. Only eleven escaped with life. They returned later and burned the village, committing unexampled brutalities, and murdered several of the inhabitants. It is well! We have another cause to feed our roaring furnace of hate.*

"All means of revenge are good, for ours is a holy war waged upon a merciless invader. We number nobles, peasants, citizens, criminals, in our armed and organised ranks. Each man will kill as he knows best. The rifle, the knife, the scythe, or the cudgel, the gardener's shears, the chemist's drugs, and the barber's razor, are lawful weapons to be used against the enemies of France. We will dig wolf-traps for these Prussian foes of ours, who plunder by method and wreck scientifically. We will tumble them down wells, drown them in rivers, burn the huts they are sleeping in over their heads. And our sisters?—our wives? They are united with us in our solemn compact of destruction. They will embrace to strangle. They will smile and stab! They will cook savoury dishes for Messieurs les Prussiens, and the dogs will eat of them and die.

"These kisses on thy sweetest eyelids. These for thy two little hands. Dost thou love me? Till death and after,

"Thine and thine only,

"CHARLES TESSIER."

There was a silence. The Minister broke it with a grim sentence:

"When this fine fellow is not murdering Prussians, he is making love to his spitfire of a wife. A fine breed of young criminals should spring from such a union."

The Satyr's mocking chuckle sounded like a comment on the speech. The Minister had deftly opened the envelope without tearing the flap, which was still moist. He now refolded and slipped back the sheet into the envelope, wetted his finger in the little jet that gurgled from the hole in the pipe behind the mask of the Satyr, and reclosed the envelope. He drew out his watch and consulted it, as the clocks of Versailles struck the half-hour, and said to Hatzfeldt, replacing the watch:

"Half-past twelve. . . . Do you know, I read something

by Félix Pyat very like this"—he slightly waved the drying envelope—"in a copy of the *Petit Journal* that was brought me the other day. . . . Now, my Mayor is due, and M. Thiers is certain to arrive on his heels. . . . I must return to the house, but I should prefer that you stayed here."

"Here, Excellency!"

The Minister laughed in the amazed face of the Secretary.

"I want you," he said, "to play the part of Leporello. . . . Frankly, I cannot understand why Madame Charles herself placed this letter in the gape of the mask. . . . I am curious to know who will fetch it away from there. . . . I am going to ask you to hide in the shrubbery and find out."

Hatzfeldt glanced dubiously at the wall. The Minister nodded.

"My two men are not sufficiently sharp-eyed to see through these bricks. Really, I must ask you to stay here and oblige me. Von Keudell must keep M. Thiers in play instead of you. . . . Why, you are quite pale. . . ."

Hatzfeldt gulped and admitted:

"That letter gave me an unpleasant sensation. I am regularly shaved by a Frenchman, you understand! . . . And these *Francs-tireurs* seem to be everywhere. Really, it is horrible!"

The Minister's brow became thunderous. The lines about his mouth hardened to granite. He said in his grimmest tone:

"They should be hanged whenever found. And not cut down, but left hanging, for a salutary warning to other rascals. . . . Do you know that the *Combat*—the organ edited by that blackguard Félix Pyat—wishes to get up a subscription for the purchase of a gold-mounted rifle to be given to the scoundrel who 'succeeds in removing

the Prussian King.' . . . Doubtless they have set their price upon the heads of Moltke, and the arch-enemy Bismarck. Well—*Auf Wiedersehen!* Ride out with me after lunch to the aqueduct of Marly, and tell me what I want to know."

And the great figure strode away, leaving the First Secretary to his unwelcome task.

"After lunch . . ." he said mentally, as he insinuated his graceful figure between a lilac and a laurustinus, and the rich soil, rendered marshy by the overflow of the lily-pool, squashily gave way beneath his once immaculate boots. "Why, good Heaven! . . . the woman to whom that monstrous epistle was addressed actually assists the Foreign Office *chef* with the cooking. The Chief swears by her *ragoûts*, and her omelettes and her *beignets*. They are certainly excellent. . . . I must avoid them for the future. A young married man with a family must be careful. I wonder, if anything unpleasant happened, whether Touti would marry again?"

The bushes were wet with rain. Little cold showers sprinkled the dandy's head and shoulders. His boots sank deeper as the wet trickled down his neck. What a degrading task for a First Diplomatic Secretary! With what shrieks of laughter his lively American Countess would read his written description of his experiences as a spy! A corn began to shoot. He sneezed. This meant influenza to a certainty. Even while he devoted Madame Charles, her bloodthirsty spouse, and all her countrymen to the hottest corner of Tophet, he kept a bright look-out. And in another five minutes or so he saw the person for whom he lay in waiting, coming down the mossy gravel-path that wound through the shrubbery.

It was Jean Jacques, the clumsy foot-boy, whose mistakes and blunders kept the Prussian Chancery attendants in a continual eruption of abusive German epithets, and

whose *patois*, proclaimed to be Swiss, was so extremely puzzling, that Hatzfeldt, who had piqued himself upon an exclusive knowledge of the French of the Tyrol, could only assign the youth to a canton of his own. He thrust his hand into the Satyr's toothed gape and pulled out the letter, twisted a wry mug as he regarded it, and said, with an admirable English accent:

"Oh, damn! . . ."

Then, at the urgent tinkle of a bell from the kitchen regions, he thrust the missive into the pocket of his striped cotton jacket and scampered back to the house.

You will remember that when Juliette had consented to marry the unknown Charles Tessier, she had, for her dear Colonel's very sake, adorned the faceless one with features, a complexion, shoulders, muscles, and so on. She had even boasted to Monica's brother of the swordsmanship of the worthy but unromantic young cloth-manufacturer, whose most sportsmanlike accomplishment was the shooting of thrushes and sparrows, which he would bring home to the Rue de Provence in triumph, to be converted by his adoring mother into savoury pies.

Now, during these days of tension and anxiety, perhaps to relieve the strain of an otherwise unbearable situation—possibly with the desire of inflicting on her unfortunate adorer the torturing pangs of jealousy, or possibly to create and maintain in herself a fictitious interest in the supposititious husband, she had begun anew to expatiate upon his gifts and graces, and, having begun, could not leave off. Her Charles had not red hair and yellow-gray eyes, a blunt nose, and a square chin with a dent in it. He was pale, with melancholy black eyes and a high brow. His jetty moustache was waxed, his imperial finished in a point of the most elegant. . . . He quoted poetry in a deep voice, and was capable of torrential outbursts of passion. He

was altogether a perfect specimen of the type of Balzac's beautiful young man.

Surfeited with these perfections, P. C. Breagh had become restive, to the point, one day, of being clumsily sarcastic on the immunity of widow's only sons from the obligation of military service, and so on.

That afternoon Madame Charles had received a mysterious communication to the effect that her lord had secretly quitted Belgium, penetrated in disguise into France, passed through the Prussian lines in a series of hairbreadth escapes, and joined a corps of *Francs-tireurs*. Since when, letters containing tirades inspired by the most flaming patriotism, sanguinary descriptions of adventure, and passionate protestations of devotion, had been found at intervals by Madame Charles in the mouth of the satyr-mask. Of late, since she had developed nervousness about fetching the letters herself, Jean Jacques had sulkily performed the office. And when she did not, with due precautions, declaim these effusions for the benefit of her victim and fellow-conspirator, his was the task—inconceivably repulsive to a young man suffering the stabs of jealousy, of reading them aloud to Madame Charles. Hence the expletive which had betrayed his British nationality to Count Hatzfeldt, standing disconsolate in his squelching patent-leathers under the dripping lilac and syringa trees.

LXIX.

From Tours, chief town of the Department of the Indre et Loire, 120 miles sou'-west of Paris as the crow flies, where Cremieux, Minister of Justice, and rather too doddery to be of efficiency at this crisis, had established

the Administrative of the Provisional Government of the new French Republic;—whither M. Léon Gambetta, Minister of the Interior, Member of the Board of National Defence, had recently betaken himself, escaping from the besieged capital to Montdidier as a passenger in the car of a balloon,—whither the veteran Garibaldi had now arrived to offer his services in the cause of Liberty,—from Tours had come the famous diplomat and man of letters, contemptuously dubbed "Professor" by Count Bismarck, with the object of carrying out the peace-negotiations in whose conduct the tragic patriarch Favre had broken down.

You saw the famous Minister and author of the *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, as a little, stocky, black-clad old gentleman with a square gray head, round, clean-shaven face, and bright, round eyes, looking through gold-rimmed spectacles. . . . Above all, a patriot, heart and soul devoted to France, the position of this famous French statesman of seventy-five, newly returned, empty of all but fair words and vain courtesies, from a pilgrimage to the Courts of various neutral Powers, was horrible and painful beyond words.

Sad, distracted, anxious little gentleman, charged with the mission of obtaining those needed terms of peace, or at least an armistice from the conqueror upon the threshold, can you see him, in the shadow of the magnificent Temple erected by the Sun King, toiling and moiling with his secretary, the younger M. Remusat, in preparation for those anguish-fraught interviews with the German Chancellor.

The tables of his sitting-room at the Hôtel des Réservoirs were piled with books and papers—papers covered with abstruse calculations dealing with the most urgent need—the provisioning of Paris—papers dealing with the question of the Elections—papers dealing with the General Census—papers of every imaginable kind. And with these, from

dawn till midnight, the little, grief-worn man wrestled, while the Tinsel Rabble and their staffs of German officers revelled in the dining-saloons, and trampled and shouted and clanked and jingled up and down the corridors, and in and out of the bedrooms; and the roar of the guns from the Forts of the beleaguered city shook the windows from time to time.

Now and then he would lie back exhausted in his chair, or lie down and sleep, if sleep ever visited him. He took his frugal meals in a private cabinet opening out of the great dining-hall of the restaurant. Since the thirtieth of October he had been engaged in this wise, save when, having been first compelled to apply to Count Bismarck for a pass and a military safe-conduct, he would meet and confer with Favre, or one of his other colleagues, at some chosen spot without the walls of the beleaguered capital.

Only the previous day he had trundled down in a little, shaky, hired brougham to the half-ruined and wholly-deserted suburb of Sèvres, preceded by an officer of Uhlans with a White Flag on a pole.

Day after day the little brougham had drawn up before the modest house in the Rue de Provence, and the little gentleman, whose head seemed to whiten perceptibly, had stepped out with his portfolio under his arm, as now. Day after day the Chancery footmen would open the door to him, and Madame Charles Tessier, hovering in the background, would drop the representative of suffering France her lowest curtsey, and sometimes gain a brief word with his unfailing bow and smile. To-day, as Major von Keudell appeared in the doorway of the drawing-room,—the Chancellor being closeted in his private interviewing-room upstairs with the Republican Mayor of Versailles,—the little gentleman said simply, offering his hand to the eccentric-looking person in the cap with lappets and the white shawl.

"The sympathy that is expressed in looks and by silence can be very eloquent and very touching. From my heart I thank you for yours, Madame!"

And as she had burst out sobbing and kissed the hand, he had drawn it away with a murmured protest, and had passed on into the drawing-room where Von Keudell was to hold him in conversation until the Mayor had been polished off.

But M. Thiers had endured the ordeal with a courteous kind of resignation, only looking at his watch from time to time, or glancing at the clock over which presided the horned, bat-winged, cloven-hoofed and tailed figure that tickled the fancy of his oppressor so much.

"His Excellency expected me," he said. "There has been no mistake about the time of the appointment,—named by himself at our previous interview. The greatness of the interests concerned are apprehensible by His Excellency!"

The mild sarcasm rebounded pointless from Von Keudell's bluff rejoinder:

"No, no mistake at all. His Excellency has merely shifted the hour. From half-past twelve to a quarter to one—His Excellency found it more convenient."

"What boors are these Germans!" thought the angered diplomat, writhing, as some mediæval victim, condemned to undergo torture by rack and fire, might have writhed at the delay of the hideous ordeal.

And then the door opened. The Chief Torturer looked in with the salutation:

"A pleasant day! I am quite at your service now, if you will come up to me. . . . You know the way, I think? . . ."

And the great figure vanished, and the heavy footsteps thundered up the drugget-covered stairs.

Did the sorrowful visitor know the way to the torture-

chamber ? Surely malice must have prompted the query addressed to the unfortunate plenipotentiary of France.

The room he had so loathed had one window looking out on the Rue de Provence, and another at the south side of the house, where stood the pine-tree and the turtle-backed green glass conservatory with the wrought-iron bridge above it. It had a figured gray carpet, a green hearthrug with red edges, dark green stuff curtains, and various oil-paintings and steel engravings hung upon the walls, which were painted coffee-tinted cream. It was furnished with a writing-table, on which were a terrestrial globe, a celestial one, and a tellurion; a large gray marble-topped chiffonier; a sofa covered with chintz, pattern red-and-gray birds-of-paradise on a black ground with palm-leaves; two cane chairs and a round centre-table, upon which lay a platter of wood containing the coloured glass marbles with which one plays the game of solitaire.

It was a game of solitaire which was played in that stiff, primly-furnished apartment, in one corner of which stood a mahogany bedstead of Empire pattern, with an obsolete drapery of green-figured brocade. Such a game as may be played by a grim, greedy, gray-moustached Grimalkin with a plump, bright-eyed, feebly-palpitating mouse.

M. Thiers had been gravely imperilled by the shell-fire of the French guns in the act of returning from Sèvres on the previous day, a mischance which had increased the palpitations which were caused by his heart-disease, and wounded his feelings cruelly. Commented the Chancellor, to whom he unwisely related the episode:

"Fortunately the cab-horse was too ill-fed to bolt, but the window was broken, and you were mud-splashed all over. . . . Not exactly the first time that your countrymen have treated you in that way ! . . ."

And this first scratch of the claw that never failed to draw blood was followed by the query whether M. Thiers

were provided with full powers for carrying on the negotiations ?

The Minister added, enjoying his victim's start and look of horrified astonishment:

"My people in Paris tell me that there has been practically a Revolution, and that a new Government is coming into power. On the Place before the Hôtel de Ville there were yesterday 15,000 persons assembled, most of them National Guards from the Faubourgs, disarmed and crying: '*Vive la Commune !* . . . *Point d'Armistice !*' "

He went on, unheeding the writhing of the sufferer, whose dignity had been so cruelly wounded:

"It appears that the Mayors of Paris had been summoned by Arago, and were in one room conferring, while in the other was the Government. Mobiles guarded the doors, but were thrust back by the insurgents. General Trochu came out and confronted them. He could only mouth and gesticulate in a sort of dumb Crambo. Cries of '*À bas Trochu !*' drowned his voice. There was a rush. . . . . One does not know how, but Trochu finally escaped out of their clutches,—got out by a back door and escaped to the Louvre. . . . Here is one of the slips of paper that were thrown from the windows of the Hôtel. . . . They have '*Commune décretée ! Dorian Président !*' upon them. There was a scene of confusion peculiar to your nation, in the midst of which M. Félix Pyat and other virtuous citizens proclaimed the Commune, and constituted themselves into a Government embracing Blanqui, Ledru-Rollin, Délescluze, Louis Blanc, and Flourens. . . . Flourens got upon a table—made himself heard, it seems, finally calling upon the Members of the Government of National Defence to resign. M. Jules Favre refused . . . was arrested with the old Government—the new Government reigned until two o'clock in the morning, when some battalions of Mobiles—the 106th and 90th, under

Picard, closed in upon the Hôtel and ejected them. Trochu was there with his staff. . . . Since, a general sort of agreement appears to have been arrived at. A decree signed by Favre was placarded yesterday, announcing that on Thursday next a vote is to be taken whether there is to be a Commune or not. . . . What I relate happened the day before yesterday. Now, if Your Excellency saw M. Jules Favre at Sèvres yesterday afternoon, he must have told you of the turn things were taking. Oblige me with a plain answer to a plain question. . . . Did he tell you, or did he not ?"

The humiliated gentleman bowed his head assentingly. The hot sweat of a mortal agony stood upon his broad forehead, and flushed and working features. His glasses were dimmed with the reek of his torment and his shame. The Enemy knew all. There was no concealing anything from one so well served by spies and informers. Probably the cruel interview with his fellow-Minister had been listened to, from its beginning to its end.

Thiers and Favre had sat on two iron chairs at a gaily painted little iron table, before one of the wrecked *cafés* that boasted the sign of *La Belle Bouquetière*. No one had been near except a haggard, absinthe-sodden wretch, who had lain in a drunken stupor upon the pavement, under the broken window of the deserted restaurant. Perhaps that drunken man had been *his* spy. . . . What was he saying in the harsh, bullying tones that grated so ? . . .

"The mob who rode roughshod over General Trochu and his Council of lawyers and orators, appear to be actuated by the desire of fighting things out with us. They burn for a chance, it appears, to pit their undisciplined courage against the Army of United Germany. They are hardly to be blamed for accepting literally the theatrical bombast with which they have been fed by Favre !"

He laughed, and said, with a galling imitation of the rhetorical manner of the Democratic barrister of Lyons:

"'Not a stone of our fortresses'—do you remember? 'Not an inch of our territory!'—have you forgotten? . . . When it was in the power of the person to whom he boasted to have said to him: *Every inch. Every stone!* . . . When ours is the right, if we choose, to take not a part, but everything;—leaving you nothing but your eyes to weep with, and your tongues, to pray with or curse!"

He rose up, towering over the unhappy personage who sat opposite to him, in a little wicker easy-chair that would have suited a child. His greedy vitality physically sucked energy from his victim. The stare of his great eyes oppressed, the roughness of his speech had a wounding brutality.

"Which Party governs France? The Blue Republicans or the Reds, answer me? Can one treat with a State that has no responsible heads?"

"Monsieur le Comte!" screamed the personage thus cruelly prodded. "Do you not know that you are insulting me?"

He had grown deadly pale, and now flushed red, making a passionate gesture as though to strike himself on the forehead, as the other asked him with bitter irony:

"Is the truth so offensive to you as all that? . . . If you did not wish to hear it, you have come to the wrong shop. The day for compliments and flatteries has passed with the tinsel Empire of your Napoleon, unless you compel us to bring him back and set him up again at the Tuileries. Believe me, he has contemplated this eventuality!—has his carpet-bags ready packed, and his eagle in a travelling-cage. . . . And certainly we could discuss the military questions at issue better with him than with you civilian gentlemen, who do not understand the language of War."

It was not possible to get a word in edgeways. . . . The

rasping voice tore the nerve-fibres as with a saw-edge, the towering figure overwhelmed, the powerful stare fascinated and terrified as the pitiless gaze of the snake when fixed upon a frog or a bird.

And Bismarck went on, deliberately lashing himself into a passion:

"Are you and your colleagues aware that I suffer in my reputation for these procrastinations? It is said at home in Germany that I am over-lenient towards the French, . . . that I delay to reap for United Germany the glory and profit for which she has paid so terrible a price in blood. Yourself, with MM. Ducrôt and Favre have considered my terms for an armistice inadmissible. . . . You would hold the elections—even in those provinces of France which we hold as conquerors! You would re-provision Paris and her fortresses! We should be hellishly unpractical if we listened to you! . . . What the big devil! . . . Are we to permit the levies, and the recruiting by which the French Republic may hurl against us a new army to shoot down? *Himmelkreuzbombenelement!* . . . Do you take us for sheepsheads?"

The unhappy Minister protested in a faint voice:

"Monsieur le Comte, I do not even comprehend the meaning of the term!"

"Ah, by God!" thundered the terrible voice, "you are ignorant indeed of German words and German meanings, and the word that you understand least of all when applied to yourselves is WAR! Silk gloves are not our wear in War, and therefore the iron gloves with which we have handled you, have pinched your soft flesh and made you squeal. We might complain of your *Francs-tireurs*, who hide in woods and houses, and shoot our soldiers unawares; and of the unhumanity of your *mitrailleuses* which cut red lanes through whole regiments. Have we not held treaties sacred? Have we not respected neutrality? Have we

in a single instance broken one article of the Code of International War ? Yes and No ! And yet you are the sufferers—you are to be pitied—even for the injuries you wreak upon yourselves. . . ."

He struck with his clenched fist the top of the chiffonier near which he stood, and the dull shock of the contact of that sledge-hammer of muscle and bone with the solid marble, made the pictures shake upon the walls, the windows rattle in their frames, and the bewildered listener leap as if he had been shot.

"I rode over to St. Cloud yesterday," he went on, "to look at the palace you have set on fire with your shells from Mont Valérien. It is burning still, as I don't doubt you know. A well-dressed French gentleman stood looking at the smouldering ashes of the conflagration. Near him was a French workman in a dirty blue blouse—'*C'est l'œuvre de Bismarck !*' said the gentleman to the plebeian, little dreaming who was near. . . . But the cad in the blouse only said to him: 'Why, our —— gunners did that themselves !' That workman had more sense in his pumpkin than the whole lot of you !"

M. Thiers revived under the fresh insult sufficiently to plant a sting:

"It is said, Monsieur, and on excellent authority, that the Imperial Palace was sacked by German troops before it was set on fire."

The Chancellor lowered his heavy brows and demanded almost menacingly:

"Do you assert that His Majesty the King or the Crown Prince of Prussia were parties to a crime of this kind ?"

"No, Monsieur, not for an instant !"

The Chancellor said with a short laugh that had no mirth in it:

"That is fortunate, otherwise I should have been compelled to break off, and finally, our negotiations with regard

to this question of an Armistice, and deal only with the question of the territory to be ceded—in addition to the fortresses of Metz and Thionville, and Alsace less Belfort—and those six thousand millions of francs that we shall certainly take from you !"

The thrust caused M. Thiers to leap to his feet, galvanised into a feverish energy. He screamed, raising his clenched hands and sweeping them downwards and outwards:

"It cannot be, Monsieur !—it is outrage—robbery—ruin ! Europe will intervene if you persist in such a demand !"

"Ha, ha, ha !" The great jovial giant's laugh set the crystal drops upon the mantelshelf-vases and the wall-mirror girandoles tinkling, and reached the hearing of Hatzfeldt and von Keudell in the drawing-room, and the decipherers in the Bureau below. It vibrated through the joists and planks and spaces above the plastered ceiling, and made Madame Charles start where she lay upon the floor of her bedroom listening, with her ear pressed to the uncarpeted boards.

"My good sir, you are making game of me ! . . . You have visited the Courts of the Powers—we know to what profit ? . . . You have solicited intervention—to be told what both of us knew very well before ! . . . The British Lion may lash and roar, but will not do more, that is certain. England has not sufficiently recovered from the war of the Crimea—from the further drain of men and gold caused by the Indian Mutiny. . . . Austria, in spite of creeds and bias—with her German-speaking population and her Germanised institutions—may be regarded as a powerful German State. Italy lies under the heel of Austria. If the Russian Bear elect to hug, the hugging will be done upon our side. For it is inconceivable that Germany should ever be at war with Russia. Our in-

terests are and have always been one! . . ." He laughed again, and said, laughing:

"And, knowing this, you threaten me with the intervention of European Powers. . . . You will hear nothing with respect to forfeiture of territory! . . . You refuse to contemplate the question of the Gold Indemnity! . . . Wait!" he said—"wait until the bombardment is a month old and the bread-basket is empty. . . . Then we shall hear you sing to a different tune!"

"Monsieur le Comte! . . ."

The old man tottered to his feet. He was ashen in hue, and trembling. His blue lips hung breathlessly apart, his eyes had a lack-lustre stare behind their gold-rimmed glasses; he pressed a hand over his left breast as though to repress a pang of pain.

"M. le Comte . . . I have suffered too much. . . . I find myself unable to continue our interview. . . . With your permission . . . to-morrow? . . ." He bowed and took his hat and cane, and repeated weakly: "To-morrow?"

"With pleasure!" said the Man of Iron, escorting him to the door.

And the old, humiliated, fallen King-maker, the great literary genius, the polished orator—tottered away out of the presence of the conqueror.

He was to return upon the morrow, and for many days thenceafter, to be played with and tortured, to be tantalised and mocked.

He was to return flushed with futile hope, only to be crushed and retire discomfited. He was to furnish an inexhaustible source of amusement for the delectation of his implacable enemy.

He was to return after a prolonged absence within the walls of the beleaguered capital, he and others, faint with famine, broken by anxiety, shattered by suspense and

sleeplessness; forced by sheer hunger to sit and partake at the groaning board of their merciless foe, compelled by his arrogance to listen to his jestings, moistening the food they placed between their livid lips, with the stinging salt of tears.

LXX.

The centre of a small but lively group, composed of admirers and listeners, Prussian officers known in Berlin, their Bavarian and Hessian friends and acquaintances, American and English Press Correspondents, and a travelling Oriental or two—you might have observed Madame de Straz—a full-blown Comtesse now, in virtue of the patent of nobility asserted by her husband,—in the restaurant of the Hôtel des Réservoirs—not always accompanied by her Assyrian-featured lord.

Adelaide had not grown younger since the adventure of the Silk Scarf. Her bold and striking beauty had suffered gravely, though her figure, set off by its fashionable and well-chosen dress, was as supple and graceful as of yore. She looked like some gorgeous fruit that the wasps had ravaged, and to conceal this she made up heavily and wore thicker veils. What she now lacked in loveliness she endeavoured to make up in *espièglerie* and easy-going good-fellowship. Not a few officers responded with enthusiasm to her pressing invitations to breakfast or lunch at the little country villa she and M. de Straz had rented, at Maisons Laffitte beyond St. Germain.

One need hardly say that there was play on these occasions, besides excellently-prepared dishes and a liberal flow of capital champagne, besides the cognac and liqueurs of which Madame drank a good deal.

To quiet her nerves, ravelled by the unhappy situation

of her beloved country, she declared, for it suited her to be a Frenchwoman now.

She would have dearly liked to inveigle a Duke, Grand or Hereditary, or even a Prince Regnant, to her roof-tree and her baccarât-board, but these personages, bestarred and beribboned, furred, jack-booted, buck-skinned and long-spurred, were as shy as the hares and partridges in the forest, that were incessantly cracked at by hungry pot-hunters. Wherefore the sumptuous Adelaide must perforce be contented with Counts and Barons, whose purses were less lengthy than their pedigrees, as a rule.

"A solitary nest and too remote, it may be. . . . But for a bride and bridegroom, solitude and remoteness have their advantages!" had proclaimed M. de Straz, with a shrug of infinite meaning, and suggestive glances of his black Oriental eyes. Certainly the guests of Madame and Monsieur, even when conveyed to the destination in hired broughams and victorias, were wont to find the road, running through abandoned villages and by deserted châteaux; unexpectedly barricaded with felled timber and scarred with unfinished trenches, more than a trifle long.

The nest of the love-birds, half a mile from the sacked railway-station and the broken bridge of Maisons Laffitte, was enclosed in private grounds. The Villa Laon—how or from whom acquired, nobody ever thought of questioning—was a cottage with Swiss gables and East Indian verandahs standing in gardens adorned with glass arcades and Italian pergolas, their vines and roses stripped and shuddering in the bitter wintry winds. There were also Chinese bridges crossing pieces of ornamental water, aviaries of finches and canaries, and wired enclosures once well stocked with silver pheasants, now, thanks to the nocturnal ravages of mysterious marauders, depopulated in a manner painful to behold.

"You pretend," said Valverden teasingly to Adelaide,

"that the neighbours creep out at night and annex the pheasants, or that our cavalry-pickets take them for the mess-pot, or that they are stolen by *Francs-tireurs*. *Francs-tireurs* there are, in plenty in the neighbourhood,—every hour some honest German soldier gets his death at the hands of one of these scoundrels!—but as far as concerns the vanished inmates of the pens and cages, I believe you and M. de Straz have eaten them yourselves!"

He stretched his long spurred legs out over the brocade of an Empire sofa gracing Madame's boudoir, and leaning back his handsome head, looked up at her teasingly.

"With my assistance, for that *salmis* we had for breakfast was of home production I am certain. Come, own that I have guessed as well as Mariette can cook at a pinch."

Adelaide frowned and bit her lip. But she let her gaze dwell lingeringly on the upturned face of the handsome Guardsman, and said, seeming to search for her own sulky, splendid image in the blue eyes with which Adonis made play:

"If you were less like Max I believe I should detest you! . . ." She added, after an instant: "And if you resembled him more than you do, you would find no welcome here."

"Beyond *salmis* of pet pheasants, and stewed carp out of your landlord's fish-ponds." His red lips rolled back in a grin that showed the strong white teeth, the fuzzy ends of his fair moustache sparkled as though the hair had been sprinkled with gold-dust. "Who is your landlord? I am dying to know. Do you rent the place of the gardener, or that pompous-looking butler who has not got the key of the cellars, but nevertheless can produce champagne of Comet brand and excellent Roussillon. Or is it a speculative partnership? Some of us have dropped a good deal of money here in play lately. . . . They are beginning to

grumble noisily—particularly that little black-haired *aide-de-camp* of the Duke of Coburg, and von Kissling of the squadron of Blue Dragoons quartered here at Maisons Laffitte. . . . What's in the wind I don't pretend to know, but they might get you turned out of here—they might even obtain an order from Headquarters for the return of their lost cash ! . . ."

" Bernhard !" Her ringed white hands tenderly caressed his forehead. " You will protect me from them !—you will stand my friend ! Oh ! how horrible it is to want money—always money !"

Valverden said, neatly biting off the end of a cigar and spitting the nipped-off end through the open glass-doors leading out upon the verandah:

" Has not M. de Straz got any money ? And did not my Cousin Max give you enough ? . . . You used to seem uncommonly flush of the ready when one saw you queening it among the gay *cocottes* of Berlin."

His tone cut like a whip. But Adelaide was growing used to take insults with outward meekness. She swallowed her wrath and even tried to smile.

It was horribly true that she had need of money. Even before she had fallen into her present state of servitude, she had known that a day was coming when she would be penniless.

Like all other women of her sensuous tastes and clamorous predilections, Adelaide devoured money as a pussy-cat crunches up small birds. Her dead lover had spent upon her lavishly, had provided that an income should be paid her out of his private estate. But it was not sufficient for a woman so extravagant, and Adelaide had supplemented it in various ways. Firstly, by tapping the bank-balances of admirers of the wealthier order. Secondly, by obtaining information for the Prussian Secret Intelligence Bureau. Thirdly, by signing Bills of Exchange and Promissory

Notes, for cash at ruinous rates of interest. When she had conceived the idea of obtaining a reconciliation with Henri de Bayard, the prospect of incarceration in a debtor's prison had loomed very near.

The cunning fable of her riches that had been devised to tempt him to his ruin, had failed through the very whiteness of the man's integrity. Ah, Adelaide! The way to have triumphed over the Colonel, would have been to have crept in tatters as a beggar to his door.

But she had never understood the man. Let us hope that generous soul of his was spared knowledge of the degradation of the woman he had worshipped, as Valverden went on, barely deigning to hide his contempt of her, or to modify even slightly the insolence of his tone:

"You have asked me to protect you. I have no objection to doing so. My sympathy is not at all with the losers who squeal. Even when I was as poor as a church-mouse I had the gift of being plucked without wincing. Besides, I won money that night when von Kissling dropped such a lot. . . . And of course my testimony would be worth—something! . . ."

His tone of bargaining was unmistakable. Adelaide flushed a dusky-red, through which the fading streaks of Straz's love-gift showed plainly, and her dark eyes gleamed covetously as she bent over the young man. She whispered with her hot lips almost touching the diagonal white band of forehead above his soldierly sunburn:

"What, Bernhard? Tell me what it would be worth to you? . . ."

His long blue eyes laughed up into hers, lazily. He said, feeling for the silver case in which he carried his fusees:

"Shall we say . . . a little information regarding the whereabouts of Mademoiselle Titania? . . . M. de Straz has piqued my curiosity, you will observe."

"So! . . ."

She reared above him like a furious Hamadryad, whispering thickly, for rage dried up her tongue:

"So it is of my daughter you and Nicolas have been talking apart together, both here and at the Hôtel des Réservoirs. Are you both mad? For a pale, plain, dull schoolgirl . . . a peaky, undeveloped, mincing doll!"

He raised himself to a sitting posture, and answered her coarsely:

"Women like you cannot realise what is or is not pleasing to men of my standard. The Prince Imperial must have seen a good many pretty women, young as he is, yet he found your daughter charming, I am told. . . . M. de Straz, who is a judge, admires her excessively. . . . If my curiosity is tickled, the fault is your own, for it was you and not M. Straz who first engaged my interest in that quarter. . . . Did I not at your request speak to Count Moltke of Mademoiselle? Well, he did—though at first he scouted the notion—sound Count Bismarck on the subject, when he called to congratulate him on his First Class of the Iron Cross, and be complimented on his own Order *Pour La Mérite.*"

He folded his arms on his broad chest and dropped the words out lingeringly, relishingly, his blue eyes gloating over the changes in her tortured face:

"And the Chancellor answered him: '*Do not you trouble yourself! All is well with the pretty young daughter of M. de Bayard, by that disreputable old woman who played the mistress of Count Max in* '67.' "

She screamed, and struck with her clenched hand at the fair, flushed, grinning face as though she would willingly have battered out its beauty. He caught her wrist with a fencer's quickness, and prisoned the other in the twinkling of an eye. He went on, holding her immovable:

"As a good German I do not interfere with my superiors. His Excellency knows where the girl is, and does not at

present choose to tell. But you, *Werte Frau*, have the right to question His Excellency, whose answer was repeated to me by my Chief, Count Moltke. Do not forget, however, that you lay claim to the disrepute as well as the daughter when you present yourself at the Foreign Office in the Rue de Provence. . . ."

She panted breathlessly:

"I shall not go! No one shall compel me!"

"Oh, in that case," said Valverden, rising and releasing her, "I can only leave you to the arguments of M. de Straz. He is coming now—I can hear his voice in the garden. *Auf Wiedersehen!*" He said over his shoulder, as he lounged out of the cottage: "In the affair of von Kissling, do not count on my assistance. It is only given on condition you fall in with our views."

So he and Straz were in league. . . . Rage stung her to the mad imprudence of rebellion—the proud sultana whom a thousand freakish cruelties on the part of her swarthy master had taught to be a trembling slave.

The Roumanian, we know, was nothing if not subtle. When Adelaide flatly refused to call at the Foreign Office in the Rue de Provence in the character of a bereaved and yearning mother, he smiled on her, almost tenderly. He kissed the wrists Valverden's grip had bruised.

"Queen Rose of my Garden of Delights," he said, "why did you let the girl go in the beginning? You recognised her value even when you did not know that she has money in her own right."

Money. . . . A new light began to break upon Adelaide. The poison of jealousy worked still, but fear of a sudden and violent death no longer stiffened her muscles. She moistened her lips, pale under their rose-tinged salve, and lifted her eyebrows inquiringly.

"Money, soul of my soul," said Straz, who had almost reverted to the original gushing and poetic Nicolas of

Adelaide's remembrance, the lover whom in pre-Sigmaringen days she had cajoled and despised and betrayed. "Not a large fortune certainly, but between her grandmother's estate and her father's savings she has a sum of 80,000 francs invested in the Belgian cloth-manufactory and dyeing works of M. Charles Tessier. Not a fortune, but not a sum to, as I say, despise." He added: "I have obtained this information from a person—formerly a clerk in the employment of the Versailles firm of solicitors who enjoyed the confidence of M. le Colonel and his sainted mother." The quirk of his lips and the roll of his eyes as he made this reference, so unsavoury in the ears of Adelaide, cannot be described. "From this retentive person—I refer to the ex-clerk,—I have purchased the intelligence I now divide with her who has the right to share the secrets of my heart."

Adelaide had previously seated herself, at a motion of his finger. She looked up now as he thrust a hand between his vest and shirt-bosom. Their glances met. He said to her with a snap of his thick white fingers:

"No! Put that out of your head, *ma cocotte!* Not a sou of de Bayard's will ever come his widow's way."

This uncanny faculty of the Roumanian for reading her unspoken thoughts was one of the secrets of his power over Adelaide. She shuddered now, encountering his look.

"Don't you know," he was demanding, "that with her unique beauty Mademoiselle would be good money in our pockets even were she penniless? What! you doubt the justice of my taste—which placed on you the seal of approval when your own charms were at their perihelion! You who have paid the price for those supreme moments when celestial flames enveloped you—when you knew yourself nearest to the bosom of the Sun!"

A fierce surge of blood rushed to her brain. She heard

his thick chuckle as she loosened, with shaking hands, the lace about her throat.

"Why do you not kill me outright?" she cried to him, as the tide rushed back to her heart, and left her livid. "Are you not weary of playing this hideous farce of marriage? Why murder me by inches? . . . Will you never set me free? . . ."

He said, combing his clubbed beard with his thick yellow-white finger-tips:

"When you have helped to get back Mademoiselle, I will think about providing you an honourable retirement. Come! Be pliant. . . . You have my word that you shall be free. But without funds," he shrugged, "who can do anything? And Mademoiselle has these expectations . . . and beyond these I have certain definite arrangements with —a certain personage—who is—content to pay handsomely for an introduction to her."

She cast caution to the four winds and shrieked at him furiously:

"'De Bayard's daughter by that disreputable old woman! . . .' Ah, for that he shall indeed pay handsomely!"

For though the sentence quoted by Valverden bore the unmistakable stamp of the Iron Chancellor's mintage, the tone in which the words had been repeated, the icy glance of contempt that had accompanied them, rankled in the flesh of the unhappy woman, like barbed thorns.

The venom wrought in her still, even to hardihood and a courage bordering on effrontery, when a few days later her hired carriage drew up before the sentried gate of the Tessier mansion in the Rue de Provence, early in the forenoon of a December day.

LXXI.

One of the black-garbed Chancery attendants opened the yellow-painted hall-door. Madame tendered him a card, and said in her most musical tones, plying the archery of her fine eyes:

"Madame de Straz, formerly de Bayard. By appointment to see His Excellency the Chancellor."

Von Keudell looked out of the drawing-room and signalled. The Chancery attendant caught his eye. Madame, borne upon a gale of costly perfume, swept her velvets and Russian sables over the Foreign Office threshold, and amidst the tinkling of lockets, and charms, and bracelets innumerable, was ushered into the drawing-room.

As the door shut, and the Chancery attendant resumed his bench and his German newspaper, Jean Jacques Potier, who had been polishing the hall parquet with a flannel clout on one foot and a brush strapped on the other, resumed his labours with a very red face. Madame Charles Tessier, who had been watering the ferns and pot-plants on the console-tables, wrapped in the woollen shawl that seemed parcel of her individuality, might have struck the young man, when he furtively glanced at her, as being whiter than her shawl.

But the deadly whiteness passed, and the rigor of terror could add little stiffness to the gait that was a compound of a limp and a shuffle, as the Twopenny Roué's bugbear climbed the back-stairs to her second-floor room.

Madame Potier slept in the next. One could hear her making beds on the first-floor beneath one. Judging by the sounds, she was sweeping the Chancellor's sleeping-room. *Knock-knock!* went her busy broom every instant, against the furniture or the wainscot. *Flip-flap!* That was the duster, being shaken out of the window. When the

Minister was unwell, and kept his room, Madame did not sweep, but merely dusted and made the bed. And he lay on the sofa, pulled near the fire and lengthened with a settee, or worked with his back to the window, at a table in the middle of the room. There were two great black leather despatch-boxes on the table, and a great many maps of France, covered with marginal annotations; and the brass-handled mahogany bureau near the washstand-alcove was piled high with boxes of long, strong Bremen cigars. And by the bed was the night-table, with the framed photographs of his daughter and Countess Bismarck, his travelling candlestick, a supply of hard wax candles in a box, matches; a volume of Treitschke's "Heidelberg Lectures," with several little good books, in cloth bindings, "Daily Readings for Members of the Society of Moravian Brethren," and "Pearls from the Deep of Scripture," as well as a bottle of patent medicine and a box of pills, both of which nostrums were renewed constantly, and neither of which seemed to do him any good.

For he coughed and hawked and spat bile continually. Rarely was he silent before two o'clock in the morning, and then it might be that one ceased to hear him, because one had succeeded in wooing sleep for oneself. Something ailed him. Those who knew him best gave no name to his ailment. Others whispered of catarrh of the stomach. Yet others were oracular upon the subject of dyspepsia of the acute kind.

Whatever the indisposition, it was fostered by the indiscriminate generosity of his admirers, who continually forwarded from all parts of the German Fatherland huge consignments of delicacies solid and fluid for the delectation of their Chancellor.

Choice wines, rare cigars and fine tobacco, liqueurs and old corn-brandies, cold punch in barrels, beer of Berlin and Leipzig, and the brunette drink beloved of

Bavarians. Smoked Pommeranian goose-breasts, cakes, sausages of every variety, fresh salmon and sturgeon, pickled tunny, herrings and caviar; game of all kinds, smoked hams of bear, deer, mutton, and pig. Magdeburg *sauerkraut* and Leipzig pastry, preserves and fruit, fresh and candied, gorged the capacious storerooms and cellars of the Tessier mansion, which would have been found inadequate to accommodate all these mountains of good things, had not each Privy Councillor, Secretary and decipherer of the Chancellor's perambulating Foreign Office, possessed a capacity for gorging only inferior to the Chief's.

In truth this great Minister, so pitiless in his mockery of the idiosyncrasies and weaknesses of others, habitually overate himself; showing as little mercy towards his stomach as the staff of the Berlin Chancellory displayed towards the gorged and replete leather despatch-bags that came to him by every post. He was horribly greedy, and drank a great deal, and his stomach-aches, like himself, were on the colossal scale. More than once Madame Charles had ministered to their assuagement with infusions of carbonate of soda and peppermint.

"One should check the appetite when one suffers thus from over-indulgence," she had once said to him, stirring her dreadful infusion with an ivory measuring-spoon.

"The French climate does not suit me, . . ." he had answered her. "In Germany I can eat a great deal more than I do here. Not that I eat much really, because my dinner is my only meal."

"But, just Heaven! Monseigneur! what a meal!" she had screamed at him in horror. And the room had resounded to his giant's Ha, ha, ha!

"Without a head and stomach of iron," he told her, "such as we Bismarcks inherit from our ancestors, and Göttingen has helped to render more tough, it would have

been impossible in my young days, to get on in the Diplomatic Service. We drank the weaker men under the table, then lifted them up, propped them between chairs, and made them sign their names to all sorts of concessions which they would not have dreamed of making otherwise. . . . To this day I can toss down the strongest wines of the Palatinate like water with my dinner. Champagne I need, and the bigger glasses I get it in the more it agrees with me. . . . Port, such as the English sip with dessert, I prefer as a breakfast-wine. Corn-brandy, such as our Old Nordhausen, is indispensable for the oiling of my machinery; and I derive benefit from rum, taken after the Russian fashion, with my eight or nine cups of after-dinner tea."

He added, sipping Madame Charles's fiercely-smelling nostrum:

"Not that anything I have drunk or eaten mars my capacity for cool reflection and close argument. . . . When I and one or two others are laid by, men will only peck and sip. There will only be chatter about eating and drinking. . . . *Grosser Gott!* What things I used to do in that line when I was young!"

And he tossed off the contents of the tumbler, and mouthed at it, and set it down upon the little tray she held and dismissed her with a nod of thanks.

But Madame Charles carried away with her an idea of him as he had been in those old days, huge, loud, voracious, powerful, tempestuously jovial or ironically grim. She crowned the domed head with thick waving locks of brown hair, lightened the shaggy brows, and gave the blue eyes back their youthful fire; smoothed the deep lines from the florid face, restored his long heavy limbs their shapeliness, and reduced the girth of his waist. And it was impossible to despise the finished picture, because the man was so much a man.

Day by day, while the War went on, and Paris lay raging and spitting fire within her impregnable, impassable girdle of human flesh and steel and iron,—to this house where *he* sat solid and square at his table in his bedroom-study, reading over documents vomited by the great despatch-boxes, or letters and papers captured with balloon-posts, or driving the pen with that tireless hand of his over sheets to be conned by Monarchs and rulers of States,—came the Crown Prince of Prussia, handsome and *débonnaire*, or the dry, withered gentleman who bore the great name of von Moltke, or the War Minister von Roon, or M. Thiers, or the Saxon Minister von Friesen, or the Grand Dukes of Weimar or Baden, or the Duke of Coburg, or the Representatives of Austria-Hungary and Bavaria, or the English Ambassador, who had recently come upon a Mission to Versailles. Night after night, other and stranger footsteps crossed the threshold. Sometimes blindfolded officers in stained and weatherbeaten French uniforms had been led upstairs to that mysterious room where he sat, weaving his huge web of diplomacy, or manipulating with deft, capable touches the threads that moved both men and Kings.

Everyone came to this house on the quiet by-street of Versailles, that had become the throbbing centre of the world. . . . From the greatest to the smallest, from the worthiest to the vilest. Now, last of all came—Adelaide de Bayard.

And with her, came the question: How much *he* suspected. There had been one or two moments when Juliette had been temporarily thrown off her guard. Could one really deceive him, who was so subtle, watchful, observant ? . . . Past master in cunning, ripe in diplomacy. . . .

She heard his heavy footstep on the staircase as she held her bosom and listened. Madame Potier had finished his bedroom, and taken her broom and dustpan to the next. Madame de Bayard had been shown into the smaller

interviewing-room, where the Brussels carpet had been paced into threadbare alleys by the feet of men who were topped by aching responsibilities;—where the Crown Prince of Prussia smoked his big painted pipe of Latakia as he chatted with the Chancellor—where M. Thiers sat through long ordeals of torture in the little wicker arm-chair.

Would the mother of Juliette de Bayard sit in that chair? Her daughter knew how superbly she would rise and sweep her reverence to the Minister. How smoothly she would pour forth some false and specious tale. . . .

The Minister strode in upon Madame, carrying his cap and riding-whip. His heavy countenance had the healthier flush of exercise, his great spurred boots were plastered with clayey mud. He had but just returned from an early ride with Count Hatzfeldt, taken at this hour "To escape," as he had explained to that elegant functionary, "the detestable clattering and knocking of that female Kobold, whose day it is to sweep my room."

"Why let her sweep?" Hatzfeldt had asked, and his principal had answered:

"I approve domestic cleanliness. And a room that is used as bedroom and study, somehow harbours both spiders and dust. And I abhor spiders—nearly as much as cockroaches. Those long-waisted insects that swarm in the conservatory here give me almost a sensation of sickness when they scuttle away from my boots. I find a physical relief, actually, in crushing them."

He experienced something of that nausea and its resulting impulse towards extermination, meeting the bold eyes and the false ingratiating smile of the still beautiful Adelaide. He said, standing huge and adamantine between the woman and the window:

"Be seated, Madame. . . . No . . . not that chair! Possibly I grow old, but I find that I can best deal with certain persons when the morning light is on their faces."

"As you will, Monseigneur!"

Adelaide mentally execrated his coarse brutality as she bit her lip, pulled down her flowered veil more closely, and prepared to sink into the little wicker chair.

"No!" he said, stopping her, "not that chair!—take the other. To my idea the seat you at first selected represents at present the Throne of France, or at least the Presidential *fauteuil*. M. Thiers occupies it when he comes to see me. . . . And he is a person whom I hold in much respect."

She winced at the side-thrust.

"I regret, Monseigneur, to have forfeited your good opinion!"

"I do not usually bestow my good opinion," he told her, "upon ladies of your reputation, even though I may have reason to praise their sharp wits. Now pray state your business here. My time is limited!"

She half rose up with a pained stare of wounded feeling, thought better of it, sank down again amidst her velvets and sables, and recited her lesson as taught by Straz.

The Roumanian, by dint of diligent, patient inquiry, had collected and pieced together with marvellous cleverness, the information gathered, correlative to the movements of Juliette. Her departure from the Préfecture at Rethel, her frustrated journey to the Camp at Châtel St. Germain,—her halt at the village of Petit Plappeville, her search for the Colonel upon the battle-field, were all pieces in a mosaic miraculously restored. M. de Straz knew that Count Bismarck had seen and spoken to the young lady—had ordered separate burial for the body of de Bayard. He could even name a soldier of the German burial-party, who had helped to dig the grave. Subsequently Mademoiselle had been seen in company with a young Englishman . . . she had returned with him to Petit Plappeville. The village had been raided and sacked by

Prussian cavalry. Since when, Mademoiselle, with the young Englishman, had returned to Versailles. . . . She was occupying the Tessier mansion up to the moment of the arrival of the Chancellor with his Foreign Office Staff. And—by a most curious and deplorable coincidence, from that psychological moment to the present, all trace of Mademoiselle had been lost. . . .

"Consequently," Adelaide wound up her well-conned lesson, "myself and M. de Straz have no resource but to apply to Your Excellency. Naturally M. de Straz desires that the daughter of M. de Bayard and myself should be extricated from a compromising position and placed under our joint guardianship. He takes—such chivalry is innate in his nature—a parental interest in the poor young girl!"

Said the Minister, smiling with cynical amusement:

"Therefore in the interests of Chivalry and Morality —you call on me—as proprietor of the seraglio in which you suppose Mademoiselle to have been hidden away. . . . You demand"—he struck the riding-glove he had removed upon the palm of the right hand it had covered, "and the hint of such a demand is a menace,—do you hear?—a menace;—that I should render the girl up to you, or pay through the nose for what I once declined to buy! You think at this epoch in the history of Germany—when the search-ray of international interest is turned upon the doings of that fellow Bismarck at Versailles—that I should not care to be classed with the Minotaurs who devoured virgins and youths. Madame, they were French monarchs, I am only a Pommeranian squire! . . ."

He rose up, towering over the quaking woman, and strode across the shaking floor and pulled the green silk bell-rope by the fireplace. It came down in his hand, top ornament, wire and all, and he said as he looked at it and tossed it from him:

"That is a suggestion on the part of your Fate, which I

shall not adopt, though I could hang you and your paramour. . . ."

He added, speaking loudly as von Keudell opened the door, and the wretched woman rose and tottered towards him:

"Did I hold the secret of your daughter's hiding-place, I would not betray her to you. . . . *Adieu*, Madame de Bayard. . . . You observe that I do not add, 'and *au revoir!*'"

The great resonant voice had sounded through the whole house like a beaten war-gong. Lying upon the floor of her room, straining her ears to catch some fragments of their colloquy, it broke over Juliette in waves of thunderous sound.

Jean Jacques, below in the hall, was told by von Keudell to "see the lady to her carriage," which, in virtue of her appointment, had been admitted through the Tessier *porte-cochère*. The Swiss youth obeyed with even a clumsier grace than usual, the polishing-brush being still strapped about one instep, and the clout still swathed about the other foot, as he hobbled down the shallow doorsteps to open the brougham-door for Madame. As she stepped in and took the seat, her strained eyes leapt at his face suddenly. As he leaned in arranging the rug about her knees—what was it he heard her say:

"You are the English boy I saw in July at the house of M. de Bismarck. Do not attempt to deny, I never forget a face! When can you come and see me? . . . I must speak to you! I swear to you that I mean no harm to Mademoiselle Juliette de Bayard!"

Her lips were ashen under their rose-salve. The ringed, bare hand she laid on his rough paw burned like fire. He muttered in the weird *patois* that passed as Swiss with some German occupants of the Tessier mansion:

"Madame will pardon. . . . One does not understand!"

She gave a disjointed, unmusical peal of laughter, that rattled the brougham windows.

"Droll boy! But you will come, whether you understand or not. The Villa Laon, Maisons Laffitte, near St. Germain. . . . Night-time will be best—to-night or to-morrow night." She added, looking at him over the lowered window as he shut the door upon her: "Ask for Madame de Straz. I shall be waiting for you. Do not forget! . . ."

The carriage drove on. He stood upon the lowest doorstep staring after it, for only privileged vehicles were admitted by the *porte-cochère*. A hand fell heavily on his shoulder, startling him hideously. A terrible grating voice said in his ear, speaking in the Minister's excellent English:

"So, Madame Delilah has been trying her sorceries, has she? Come this way, my young English friend. . . . I want two words with you!"

LXXII.

In the Tessier drawing-room, where the carpet was threadbare with the traffic of the feet of Princes and plenipotentiaries, and the brocade furniture was soiled with the contact of muddy riding-breeches, and ragged with the rowels of spurs; where the bat-winged figure presided over the ancient clock of ormolu and malachite that had marked the passing of so many hours in this the death-struggle of bleeding France, Jean Jacques Potier stood up to give an account of himself, while just without the doorway waited a brace of muscular Chancery attendants, and the gigantic East Prussian coachman, Niederstedt, patrolled the terrace outside.

"You have not forgotten him! He used you somewhat roughly at the Foreign Office in the Wilhelmstrasse. Nor, as it happens, has he forgotten you. Come!—what have you admitted to that Witch of Endor, *la veuve Bayard?* You are no friend to her daughter if you have told the woman that Mademoiselle is here, under this roof."

"So you—know? . . ."

P. C. Breagh had gasped the words out before he could stop himself. The Minister's flashing blue eyes lightened in laughter as they met the appalled stare of the young man with the cropped head and the green-baize apron. He said, lisping a little as was his wont:

"I know, and I have known almost from the beginning. Everything must be known in this house. Did you suppose I had left my Prussian Secret Service at home in Berlin? Here! This belongs to you!"

He was standing on the hearth, his great back to the wood fire that blazed on the steel dogs. One of a brace of letters that he pulled from his breeches pocket, and tossed to the culprit under examination, fell at that wretch's feet.

"Pick it up, Mr. Patrick Carolan Breagh," he said. "You will find it a more-than-ordinarily interesting epistle. It was brought me something over an hour ago. Your legal friend, Mr. Chown of Furnival's Inn, Holborn, London, advises you to go back there without procrastination. Your absconding trustee, Mr. William Mustey, Junior, has been found in Bloomsbury lodgings, the War having apparently frightened him out of France. Odd, because the scent of battle-fields proves attractive to birds and animals of the predatory order. Mustey is dead, but luckily for you, he has left nearly all of your property behind him. Some £500 of your inheritance of £7,000 seems to be missing. I daresay you will be willing to let the deficit go. What are you saying?"

His victim, with lips screwed into the shape of a whistle, had murmured:

"The Post Office.... Gee-whillikins!... they've given me away!..."

"Given you away!... You are a pretty conspirator!" The masterful eyes flickered with humour. There was amusement, suppressed, but evident, in the lines about the grim mouth hidden by the martial moustache. "Where should my blue Prussian bees gather intelligence, if not at the Post Office? Did you not *give yourself away*, as you term it, when you employed the time not occupied in smearing silver plate with whitening, and bedaubing polished boards most execrably with beeswax,—in acting as a voluntary assistant dresser at the auxiliary Military Hospital that has been established under the Red Cross at the Convent of the Sisters of the Poor? When a young Swiss—who is supposed to be ignorant of any language save his own extraordinary gibberish,—betrays a more than superficial knowledge of French and German surgical terminology, and evinces a degree of skill in bandaging and so forth, such as you have permitted yourself to display, the German authorities, while they avail themselves of the young gentleman's services, are to be pardoned for supposing him to be other than he appears! Come,—it is time this farce of yours and Mademoiselle's ended. I am going to ring the bell, and send for her, and tell her so now!..." The imperious hand went out to the bell-rope of faded red, and he stayed his summons to add: 'Then you and she must pack up and betake yourselves to England.... I will furnish you with a permit to travel by railway and a *laisser-passer*. You will return to me a certain half-sheet of Chancellory notepaper which I gave you in the Wilhelmstrasse last July! Further—I have no advice to give you except that you would be wise not to select the theatrical profes-

sion for your next venture. You have not a gift for the stage, unlike Mademoiselle. . . . As for her, the vixen! you would do well to marry her promptly. Nothing else will cure a young man of the stupidity of being in love!"

There was something horrible in the mere fact of being taken so lightly, when one had waited in tense agony for the ominous flurry in the day-time—expected in sleepless anguish the cry in the night. . . . The relief that mingled with the horror caused the muscles of the mouth to relax in a smile of imbecility, made one stutter and gulp because of the choking in one's throat. . . .

The life of this man, who was meant when the great ones of the earth now referred to Germany, had been in hourly peril for months past. Now it was safe. One had not bent one's will, ineffectually, to the effort of restraining another's. One had not kept watch and put in one's word for nothing, remembering the debt one owed to that powerful, ruthless hand. Not unheard had one prayed in an anguish of supplication that the woman loved beyond all Ideals, however heroic and overwhelming, might be saved from the fate of occupying a red-stained niche in History.

"Marry her promptly!"

He repeated the words, with the flicker of a laugh playing in his eyes and about his heavy facial muscles. His tortured victim, blood-red to his cropped scalp, groaned out:

"She is married already, Sir!"

"*Quatsch!*" said the Minister, laughing: "Married she is not. Or, she has been married as the American canvas-back ducks are roasted. She has been carried on a dish through the kitchen of matrimony, and taken out at the opposite door."

"But—my God, sir!—I have seen her husband!" cried the young man desperately.

"When did you see him?" asked the resonant, compelling accents. The answer came, bringing down his frown:

"I—cannot tell you!"

Came, curiously lisped, the words:

"I fear I must compel you. All this may lead to something more serious than I have thought. . . ."

P. C. Breagh snarled, knitting the broad red eyebrows so industriously sooted:

"Twice. . . . There can be no harm in my saying so!"

"And how recently?" The grating voice scooped into one's brain like a dentist's burred scraper. P. C. Breagh shook his head, saying:

"I can't tell you that!"

"Why not, if there is no harm in telling?" The voice was almost pleasant. "Was it as recently as three days ago?"

No answer.

"Was it as recently as two days? . . . as twenty-four hours? . . . Will you not answer for your own sake?"

The stubborn head was shaken resolutely. The Minister's voice said, blandly, persuasively:

"You may, for all you know, be answering for hers!"

There was a stubborn silence. The Chancellor said, with his suave, but warning lisp more perceptible than usual:

"Be good enough to touch that bell upon the table near your hand. . . ."

P. C. Breagh obliged. Grams and Engelberg presented themselves. The Minister said, looking at them over the head of his sacrifice:

"One of you will convey my compliments to Madame Charles Tessier, and request her to speak to me here and now."

The stalwart, black-clad pair retired. The Minister pulled his cigar-case from his breeches-pocket, selected a

cigar, bit off the end, and looked for a match. Meeting the burning stare of the gray-yellow eyes under the broad sooted eyebrows, he did not fulfil his intention of lighting, but restored the cigar to its place.

As he thrust the case back in his breeches-pocket the door opened. Madame Charles came in, wrapped in her white shawl, and moving with her characteristic limp and shuffle. Her glance went to the broad-shouldered, lean-flanked figure of the young man standing at attention a little to the left hand of the Minister. She was aware of the huge shape of the watchful Niederstedt keeping guard outside the terrace-windows. She heard the steady crunching of booted feet upon the gravelled stone flags of the conservatory, recalling the fact that the two officers of the guard of Green Jaegers were now quartered there. And she said to herself, even as she made her curtesy before the Chancellor: "The hour of discovery has come! Am I sorry or glad ?"

The heavy stare met her desperate eyes as she raised them from the carpet. The grim voice began, and she strung her nerves to hear:

"Mademoiselle de Bayard, I have just closed an interview with your lady-mother, who is desirous to re-establish over your person the maternal authority she once resigned. . . . That I have not betrayed to her your presence here I think you are aware already. I had a pretty shrewd suspicion that you were listening when I spoke to her loudly just now upon the stairs. Am I right, Mademoiselle?"

She said, meeting his heavy, powerful stare with eyes of burning sapphire, steady under levelled brows of jetty black:

"It is not for me to contradict a person of Monseigneur's eminence. Might I ask why Monseigneur is pleased to designate me as 'Mademoiselle'? Madame Charles Tessier is my name in this house."

"Mademoiselle de Bayard," he said, ignoring the interruption as a man may when an infant has tugged him by the coat-tail, "I have to congratulate you upon your gift of grotesque character-impersonation, no less than your companion, whose Swiss-French *patois*, spoken with a British accent, has never since the first instant, succeeded in deceiving me. But as one of my more amiable weaknesses is a liking for children, I must own to having found infinite amusement in the spectacle of Missy and Master, dressed up for grandpapa's benefit, playing the game of 'Guess Who I Am!' . . ."

He was laughing now, unmistakably. He said, smoothing the heavy moustache with a hand that twitched a little:

"But the performance ends here. So we may lay aside the cosmetics, costumes, and properties. The hero's green-baize apron, crop-wig, and blackened eyebrows, the flour with which the heroine sprinkles her black hair, and the stockings and towels with which she disguises her charming shape. It will not seem surprising to you that a person of my dubious character should be learned in the secrets of stage disguises. . . . My early researches in femininity have led me into queerer places than actresses' dressing-rooms. But where did a Convent school-girl gain her knowledge of make-up?"

His mockery was intolerable. Her hate and scorn rose up in arms to meet it. She would be silent only for an instant longer, then she would speak and tell him all.

He was going on:

"I have here a letter, brought me some days back by the Prussian official who is in charge at the General Post Office here in Versailles. It is addressed to Mademoiselle Juliette de Bayard, 120, Rue de Provence. It is dated from Mons-sur-Trouille, in Belgium, and is written and signed by M. Charles Tessier. . . . I will not disguise from you that I have mastered the contents."

He showed her the letter. Monster ! he had opened it. Her blazing eyes dwelt on him with a contempt he did not seem to feel. She had let the white shawl drop from about her head and shoulders. Now she straightened her slight form—(as though an artist needed the adventitious aid of towels and stockings !)—and thrust back with a superb gesture of both hands the heavy loops of white-streaked hair that masked her forehead and curtained her small face, whose cheeks, previously pale, now burned with angry fire.

He said, and as he withdrew the letter from its envelope, a small, square enclosure wrapped in white paper, slipped from the interior and dropped near his spurred boot.

"I have not only read this, but I am going to read it aloud to you. For the sake of one present whose fidelity to you deserved a confidence you seem to have withheld !"

She caught one sharp breath, dropped her slender arms at her sides and stood immovably before him. Her clenched hands, tense lips and tragic brows, with that fierce flame of hatred and scorn burning beneath their shadow, betrayed the test of her self-command as he read:

"BASSELÔT & TESSIER.

"WHOLESALE MERCHANTS,

"WEAVERS AND DYERS OF WOOLLEN FABRICS.

"MONS-SUR-TROUILLE,
"BELGIUM.
"*December* 20, 1870.

"MADEMOISELLE,

"Relying on your good sense and amiability, permit me to make you a confession.

"Torn between the urgent commands of filial duty, and the dictates of ardent affection, I have yielded to the irresistible promptings of Love.

"Wedded to her I adore—the name of Mademoiselle

Clemence Basselôt can hardly be strange to you—I offer you the calm devotion of a brother. My mother is resigned to this alliance, at one time repugnant to her maternal feelings. She desires me to say that your luggage, taken on by her from the Hôtel de Flandre, Brussels, shall be forwarded to you at the Rue de Provence, or any other destination you may choose to indicate. Need I say that Madame Charles Tessier and myself regard you as our benefactress—that you will confer upon us the greatest obligation by consenting to remain beneath our roof.

"I would add that the capital of 80,000 francs invested by your regretted father upon your behalf in the business of myself and M. Basselôt can remain at the interest it at present commands (some 7 per cent. of annual profit), or be transferred to your credit at any agents or bankers you may choose to designate.

"Receive, dear Mademoiselle, with my regrets and excuses, the affectionate souvenirs of myself and my wife. My Clemence encloses some wedding-cake, after the touching fashion of England. She made it, she assures me, with her own hands.

"Respectfully and sincerely,

"CHARLES JOSEPH TESSIER."

The reader added, as he looked about him:

"Where is the wedding-cake?—that white thing! . . thank you!"

For P. C. Breagh had picked the little parcel up and restored it to his hand. He took it, returned it to the envelope with the letter, and said with unsmiling gravity, striking a finger on the envelope:

"In the face of this—are you married, Mademoiselle?"

She answered him dauntlessly:

"No, Monseigneur!"

"Th-then," he asked, with his portentous lisp, "wh-why on earth did you—did you pretend to be?"

She answered with surprising quietude:

"To make my place in this house more secure."

"Ah! Might one ask why?"

He put the question with irony. She answered with astonishing composure and dignity:

"Because at that period I desired to gain the opportunity to—kill you, Monseigneur!"

A sound came from Breagh's throat like a curse or a groan or a sob, or all together. Her clear gaze was troubled for a moment, she caught her breath in a fluttering sigh.

"To kill me? . . ." said the resonant voice of the great figure that upreared its bulk before the dancing hearth-blaze that threw broad lights and shadows upon the ceiling and walls of the darkly-papered drawing-room. It was a bitter, wintry day of sickly white sunshine, and smileless skies of leaden grayness. Freezing sleet-drops rattled on the terrace-windows, outside which the giant ex-porter of the Wilhelmstrasse waited, blowing from time to time upon his chilly knuckles and beating his great arms upon his vast chest to keep them warm, but never removing the sharp little piggish eyes under his low red forehead, from the figure of P. C. Breagh. . . .

"To kill me!" said the Chancellor, as a springing hearth-flame threw a giant shadow of him upon the double-doors that divided the drawing-room from the billiard-room, where the staff of clerks and decipherers laboured from early morning until far into the night.

In the silence that his voice had broken, his keen ear heard a quill pen buck upon a page. He imagined the splash of ink upon the thick creamy Chancellory paper, that had evoked the "Tsch!" of the dismayed clerk, even as he queried: "Might I ask why? It would be interesting to know?"

The firelight was full upon Juliette as she answered:

"Because you have made this War;—because through it

I have been orphaned and made desolate; but chiefly because you are the merciless enemy of France. These milliards you would wring from her veins . . . these groans torn from her heart . . . these indignities to all she holds most sacred ! . . . Your scorn and contempt of these great men —Chiefs of her Government—who have stooped to beg from you consideration . . . for these things, see you well !— you have been accursed in my eyes. I have said to myself a thousand times, that to kill you would be to save my country, and not a sin unpardonable in the eyes of Almighty God !"

" Your theology is as defective," said the Chancellor, " as your sentiments are patriotic. . . ." He surveyed the small slight figure before him rather ogreishly from under his shaggy brows. " And so," he said, with his wounding irony, " you thought to play the part of a Judith to my Holofernes—a little skip o' my thumb like you. . . . My good young lady, had you succeeded in murdering me, how was it your intention to evade summary justice ? For you could not have escaped detection. . . . You must be aware of that !"

She said with her quiet dignity, one hand upon her slight bosom, her clear eyes upon the angry, powerful stare that would have crushed another woman down:

" I should not have tried to escape, Monseigneur !"

He commented sarcastically:

" Fanatics are the most dangerous of conspirators. Life has no value—Death has no terrors for them. They believe themselves superior to all laws, both human and Divine. . . . And how, may one ask, would you have done my business ? To have despatched me by poison would have been easiest. for you have assisted our Foreign Office cook. Yes ! Possibly it would have been poison ?"

She said between her close-set teeth, hissingly:

" It should, Monseigneur, but for one thing ! . . ."

His powerful glance rested on her curiously:

"Ah, Fury!" he said, and with her wild black dishevelled locks, her eyes that darted vengeful blue fire, the gloomy brows that frowned over them, the long upper lip pinched down over the little closely-set white teeth, hers was not unlike the mask of a Medusa, wrought in onyx by the hand of some Greek master dead a thousand years ago.

"Ah, Fury!—and what was that one thing? To what fortunate breakage of pots in the kitchen will the Prussian King owe it that he has still a Chancellor, when he is crowned Emperor of Germany in the Palace of Versailles at the beginning of the New Year?"

Here was news. So the recalcitrant States had at last been ringed in. So the sensitive objections of His Majesty the King of Bavaria had been by some means overcome. . . . P. C. Breagh drew a sharp breath at the hearing. The speaker flashed upon him a cynical look.

"There," he said, "is a tit-bit for some enterprising Editor, were it possible to get a wire through to Fleet Street. You see what comes, Mr. Breagh, of being false to one's principles. A few months ago you said to me,—I have an excellent memory for such utterances: '*It would be better to cadge in the dustbins for a living than make money out of information gained by trickery.*' Yet you have not scrupled to live in this house disguised as a common servant. Really, to one who is aware of your ambitions, the whole thing has—a kind of stink!"

The prodded victim uttered an incoherent exclamation. Juliette cried indignantly:

"It is not true! How can you wrong him so? If you do not know what you owe to him, I will tell you. It is he who has saved your life!"

She flamed out all at once into a rage and cried, seeming to tower to twice her stature:

"Because you have robbed me of my father, and because

you are the great enemy of France I would have killed you. I tried to hide this from him, and he found it out. He stayed here—at what risk you know !—for my sake and for your sake. . . . How often has he not said to me: ' You shall not do it. He once saved me ! . . . You shall not do it because he has a daughter, by whom he is beloved, perhaps, as your father was by you ! . . . You tell me that her portrait stands by his bedside. Go and look at it, and you will never be able to do this hideous thing !' And I went and looked at her portrait, and it was as he had told me. . . . That night I threw away the poison and swore an oath upon the Crucifix, that, come what might, I would never seek your life ! . . ."

" Halt, there !" he bade her, in his rough, masterful manner. " Touch that bell upon the table near you !" he said to Breagh. As Breagh obeyed and von Keudell entered by the door leading from the hall, shutting it upon a glimpse of the stalwart Grams and the athletic Engelberg, " Fetch me that bottle," he said, " that was picked up by the sentry in the adjoining garden. I gave it to you to lock away for me."

Von Keudell vanished. In the interval that elapsed before his re-entrance the Minister turned his back upon Mademoiselle and her comrade, rested a hand upon the mantelshelf, and said, as he kicked back a burning billet that had tumbled out of the heart of the red fire:

" All that about my daughter's portrait is *quatsch !*" He suddenly wheeled upon Mademoiselle, thundering: " You were frightened. That is why you seized an opportunity to pitch away your witches' sauce. . . . Confess ! Be candid ! Have I not read you ? Were not your fine heroic frenzies all assumed to impress—him ?" He indicated P. C. Breagh by an overhand thumb-gesture. " Was it not for this spoony fellow's benefit you wrote yourself letters from an imaginary *Franc-tireur*—full of bombastic

vapourings and blood-thirsty denunciations borrowed from the columns of Parisian rags ?"

" Monseigneur ! . . ."

She was taken aback. She faltered, flushed, whitened, conscious of the reproachful stare of Breagh's honest gray eyes.

" Did I not tell you ?—everything is known to me ! . . . Not only have I read those letters you hid in the mouth of that grinning Pan in the garden—but here is the bottle you threw away ! . . ."

He took it from Major von Keudell and showed it her,—a squat, wide-mouthed chemist's ounce vial, half full of whitish powder, and read from the label:

" ARSENIC: (*Poison.*)

" *The powder as prescribed, to be diluted with Three Parts of Milk, and applied as directed, for clearing the complexion and freshening the skin.*"

" Crash ! . . ."

A turn of his wrist, and the corked-up vial flew into the fireplace, smashing on the chimney-bricks and raising showers of crimson sparks from the billets blazing there. A rich incense of scorching wool arose from the Brussels carpet. P. C. Breagh stamped out one red-hot cinder, von Keudell darted in pursuit of a remoter danger. The Minister himself was fain to extinguish another by vigorous stamps of his heavy spurred riding-boots.

" Take warning," he said to Juliette, a little breathed by his exertions, and wiping his high domed forehead and florid cheeks with a large white handkerchief, carried, in military fashion, in the cuff of his coat. " In this way dangerous, high-flown emotions should be repressed in young girls, by sensible parents. In what a false and perilous position have your hysterical notions placed you ! . . ."

He coughed and hawked, and wiped his mouth with the big white handkerchief, put it away and said, as though trying to lash himself into a rage:

"Foolish child! Silly girl! . . . Little coquette!—pretending to be married to torture a sweetheart; vapouring of murder—acting the heroine,—to take a gaby's breath away! . . . What you want is a decent, sensible mother to administer a good whipping! . . ."

A shudder convulsed her slight body. In the firelight her face looked rigid and drawn.

He might have pursued, had not the gaby to whom he had unceremoniously referred, stopped him by crying:

"Be silent! I will not stand by and listen to such language! I will not permit you to speak to her so!"

"*So!*" He surveyed the crop-headed, red-faced young man in the green-baize apron, with grim incredulity. "You will not permit me to speak! You will silence me? . . . How?"

P. C. Breagh said desperately:

"I do not know how—but I will somehow silence you. . . . Perhaps by reminding you that Mademoiselle de Bayard is helpless and unprotected. That she has no stronger champion and no better advocate than a gaby like myself."

"Retire to your room, then!" he said to her grimly. "Henceforth you do not meddle in the kitchen, Mademoiselle. You cook capitally, your *beignets* are worth a belly-ache, but just at this moment I am indispensable to Germany. . . . Observe! You will remain entirely in your room upstairs, until I decide what is to be done with you!" He added, less roughly: "Madame Potier will attend on you and bring you your meals. And—in compliment to your unflinching candour—I will ask you to give me your *parole* not to attempt to escape! . . ."

She put up both hands to her eyes, and they were

trembling. When she took them away there were tears upon her face.

"Monseigneur, I thank you. I give my *parole* not to run away."

"So be it!" he said, and slightly acknowledging her deep curtsey, motioned to von Keudell to open the door.

LXXIII.

She passed out of the room. Von Keudell held open the door for her. As he did so he glanced towards his Chief for instructions. The Minister said, answering the interrogation in the look:

"No. I prefer to extend to Mademoiselle the semi-liberty of the *parole*." He added: "Exceptional cases must be treated exceptionally. Upon a different kind of young woman I should promptly turn the key. Tell Grams and Engelberg that they are released from duty outside there. And Niederstedt. . . ."

He whistled, and the great red face and huge unwieldy figure of the East Prussian ex-door porter filled up nearly the whole width of one of the long windows. The red face disappeared as the steam of its owner's breath dimmed the glass, and the effect was so quaint that the Minister laughed irresistibly as he opened the window and relieved the impeccable guard, saying:

"Why, my good Niederstedt, you are frozen,—you smoke like a volcano. Go down to the house-steward—tell him to give you some old corn-brandy, hot, with sugar and pepper. That will thaw you inside as well as out! . . ."

He shut the window, and came back to the fireplace, pushed forward the great green brocade arm-chair and

threw himself into it, saying as he stretched his long legs out to the glowing billets:

"You may go, Mr. Breagh; there is no cause for detaining you. But while you remain here, revert to your own dress, and leave it to more experienced hands to polish the floor and balusters, to which I adhere like a fly who has walked upon treacle, half-a-dozen times in a day. Remember,—I see no reason for denying you reasonable access to the society of Mademoiselle de Bayard,—unless she objects to your visits, in which case she will probably notify me!——" He added more genially: "Sit down. Take that chair opposite me. . . . You need no longer stand in the attitude of a suspected criminal.—Indeed, I rather think you have repaid a small service I was enabled to render you in pulling you out of a Berlin crowd, last July. Ah! that reminds me. I must ask you for the return of that paper. . . ." He watched with a slight expression of amusement as P. C. Breagh produced the shabby note-case from a pocket inside his livery waistcoat, commenting: "Had you been searched, those papers would have betrayed you instantly. One more skilled in the art of disguise would have carried nothing that could afford information. That is a very elementary rule."

P. C. Breagh said, meeting the powerful eyes fully:

"I have already had the honour to explain to Your Excellency that my disguise was not assumed for any purpose but that of remaining near Mademoiselle de Bayard!"

He rose and offered the folded half-sheet of Chancellory note to the Minister, who took it, unfolded and glanced at the black upright characters above the signature, then tore the paper to pieces, and, leaning forwards, dropped it into the heart of the fire. Then he kicked back a charring log with the toe of his great riding-boot, and said, leaning back in the green arm-chair:

"Credited,—as to your statement about the reason of

your impersonation. You should see to it that Mademoiselle rewards such chivalry. As regards the pass I have just cremated—did you find it useful or—otherwise ?"

P. C. Breagh said:

" The one and only time I did use it, it proved of service to me. But later——"

" Speak frankly," said the Chancellor. " I have no disrelish for candour, you are aware."

P. C. Breagh said, flushing to the temples:

" Later, the accidental discovery that I possessed it, exposed me to the accusation of being a spy."

" So you chose to do without it ?"

" I thought," said P. C. Breagh, " that I would try to do without it. And upon the whole I managed—better than I expected to. . . ."

" To put it baldly," commented the resonant voice of the Minister, " you preferred to travel in blinkers and with hobbles on,—for the sake of a scruple of the genteel kind. That is your Celtic blood. . . . You remind me of the story —I think it hails from Dublin, of the little old spinster lady of high family, who was reduced for a living to hawking pickled pig's-trotters in the streets. She accepted the money to buy the licence, with the basket and the first instalment of trotters, and went forth into the streets to sell them—but beyond this, as a gentlewoman—her feelings did not permit her to go. So she cried, in a whisper: 'Trotters ! who'll buy my trotters ! Only a penny ! Pickled trotters ! Please God, nobody hears me !' . . . and nobody did hear her, so that was the end of her ! . . ."

He had told his absurd tale with one of those comic changes of face and voice characteristic of him. Now he reverted to gravity, and said, as P. C. Breagh rose to withdraw:

" Go ! but remain here as my guest for the present. You are not under *surveillance*. But there is one question

I must again put to you. What of this mysterious personage who represented himself to you as M. Charles Tessier ? You must now be convinced that Mademoiselle knows nothing of him ? Well, then, I will repeat the simple questions which you refused to answer just now. Where did you first see him ? how long ago? and how many times have you encountered him ?"

P. C. Breagh had been first addressed by the stranger when returning from an errand in the character of Jean Jacques. Putting it roughly, about a fortnight back. Since then, he had been twice spoken to by the same man. Interrogated as to the appearance of the stranger, he ruminated a moment, then answered: "The man was of middle height, but broad and tremendously muscular. He was remarkable to look at, very dark; with great black eyebrows, and a profile like that of an Egyptian hawk-god. No ! . . . He was more like those curly-bearded man-bird-bulls Layard dug up in the mounds of Babylonia and Assyria."

Said the Minister:

"You have answered all my questions in that simile. . . . The man is Straz the Roumanian, who is supposed to have married Madame de Bayard. What was it she said to you this morning when I had the ill-manners to break upon the lady's confidences ?"

Said Breagh, with a pucker between the broad eyebrows that would be red when he had washed off the soot:

"Whatever she is, she is Mademoiselle de Bayard's mother, and I would ask Your Excellency to remember it too."

"*Quatsch !*" said His Excellency roughly. "Mademoiselle de Bayard—for whom I have a sneaking sort of kindness, in spite of her avowedly blood-thirsty intentions towards myself !—has no worse enemy than that adventuress-mother of hers, and you should be aware of it by

this time. In plain words, she visited me in the Wilhelmstrasse upon an occasion you will remember, to offer to sell me Mademoiselle as bait for the better catching of an Imperial fish. I did not take the high horse with her, but refused her simply as declining an unsuitable business-proposal." He laughed and added: "These good ladies have conveniently short memories. Imagine her coming to appeal to me to-day, in the character of a bereaved mother with a yearning heart! . . . Well, now she has asked you to go to see her? Have I not hit it?"

Answered Breagh:

"She told me that I was English, and that she remembered having seen me at Your Excellency's. She asked me where her daughter was, and then,—when I pretended stupidity—she laughed, and insisted that I must visit her to-night or to-morrow night. How late did not matter. She seemed certain that I would come!"

"Well, you will go to her," said the Minister, "but not to-night, I think! To-morrow night would be preferable! . . . If you appeared to-night, she would think that you are to be easily got over, and she would not show her hand to you. Go to her late. Twelve o'clock will not be too late for her. Women of her type are usually night-birds,—and, besides, most people sit up on Christmas Eve. Report direct to me at whatever hour you may get back. I myself am not likely to turn in before daylight, because the Crown Prince and the three Bavarian Envoys dine here." He added, looking quizzically at the young man: "Now you are saying to yourself, 'That has something to do with the scheme for the accession of the South German States to the North German Confederation. . . . An agreement has been definitely arrived at. That is why Bismarck let that fat plum drop about the New German Empire just now!' "

He laughed outright as P. C. Breagh reddened, but made no effort to deny the charge, and went on:

"Baden and Würtemburg have come to terms. You cannot use the intelligence before it will be known by everyone in London, so I risk nothing by telling you. Our chief stumbling-block has been the King of Bavaria, who suffers from gumboils, and considers that in turning the Palace of Versailles into a military hospital, we have outraged the shades of Louis XIV., Madame de Montespan, Louis XV., Madame de Pompadour, and Queen Marie Antoinette." He added curtly: "There! be off, and tell Grams to send word to the stable that I am ready for the horses. I ride with Count Hatzfeldt an hour earlier to-day. And change those clothes, if you would have me cease to address you as a footboy. . . . Clothes cannot make a man, but the lack of them can mar him,—if they make him appear a clod!"

The horses came, and he rode out with Hatzfeldt. There was a piercing north-east wind and a spatter of freezing sleet, much resented by the Diplomatic Secretary and his thin-skinned thoroughbred, and even displeasing to the Chancellor's great brown mare.

The iron lions of Mont Valérien were growling and spitting shell down into the surrounding valleys, thickly wooded with trees, now stripped,—all save the firs and pines—of leaves, and glittering-white with frost. The lakes in the parks were frozen. Hundreds of thrushes drifted like leaves before the icy gale, towards the low-growing coverts of ivy and brushwood. A balloon rose within the Bois de Boulogne, soared, and travelled south-west.

Reaching the Aqueduct of Marly, they dismounted, for the purpose of taking what the Minister termed "a peep at Paris from the platform," and, leaving their horses to the care of the grooms, transferred themselves there.

Behind the Forest of Marly the red sun of December was sinking over the frosty landscape. The Minister glanced casually through his glasses at the ruined houses of Louvéciennes in the foreground, sheltered amidst their clumps of whitened trees; and sweeping over the villages of La Celle and Bougival, looked long towards Fort Mont Valérien, where the great stronghold sat perched on its height with its many windows glowing like furnaces in that fierce reflection from the crimson west.

The line of the Rennes and Brest railway running from Courbevoie through the Park of St. Cloud and Versailles, showed strongly held by Prussian outposts. Beyond, between banks dotted with damaged hamlets, and bordered on the north side with fanged ice-sheets, the silver-gray Seine wound, flowing sluggishly about her islands, wrinkling her lips in disgust at the jagged buttresses of the bridges that had been blown up. Farther south, over the lopped trees of the Bois de Boulogne, rose the great shining dome of the Invalides, bathed in that ominous ruddiness, looking like a great cabochon ruby studding a shield of silvery-green bronze. For Paris from this point of view is shield-shaped, crossed with the bar-sinister of her historic river; backed with her fortifications as by the enamel-and-silver work of a cunning jeweller; set with points of diamond where the bayonets of a column of marching infantry moved out from the ramparts along the road towards Fort Vanves.

It was frightfully cold. Said Hatzfeldt, stamping to recover the circulation in his numbed feet, and beating his gloved hands vigorously upon his sides:

"How cold. . . . I can smell more snow. Heaps of it, coming!"

The Chief turned an eye towards the speaker without lowering the glasses through which he was looking. He completed his survey before he said, restoring the bin-

oculars to their case, and speaking with a jarring note of anger in his voice that made the Secretary arch his eyebrows:

"I do not smell what I should like best to smell, and that is, the smoke of a German bombardment!" He added: "We have to thank women and priests, and Jews and Freemasons if our operations are not conducted as energetically as they should be. To begin with, Monsignor Dupanloup has Augusta by the apron-string,—the Crown Prince, cajoled by his wife and bullied by Victoria, his mother-in-law—is ready to give up the command if I insist that we begin. . . . Do you know how many weeks it has taken me to get our Most Gracious to consent that the siege-train should be moved from Villa Coublay and placed in position? And then Moltke and the generals asserted that we had not ammunition enough. . . . Given three hundred powerful siege-guns—ninety of them howitzers—with fifty or sixty mortars, and five hundred rounds of ammunition for each—could not we pour sufficient shell into the city to bring her to reason? Give me the post of Commander-in-Chief for twenty-four hours—and I will take it upon myself! . . ."

Hatzfeldt said mentally:

"Ah, the devil! wouldn't you—and with a vengeance!"

The Chancellor went on, deep lines of anger and vexation digging themselves into his gloomy face:

"Never were two men more reluctant to reap the fruits of a great victory than our Most Gracious and his Heir-Apparent—who in this matter as in some others, needs a candle to light up his head! . . ."

His face took on a sullen cast. He stamped his foot upon the ground and bayed out like some deep-mouthed bloodhound:

"If they have no ambition of their own, these Hohenzollerns—do not they owe something to mine?"

He ended, breaking into his great laugh, evoked by something in the expression of his Secretary:

"Here am I—applying to you for sympathy, who are just as petticoat-ridden by your Countess as the King and Prince Fritz by their respective better-halves. Have you not your mother-in-law and your millionaire-papa-in-law shut up there in the Rue de Helder—to say nothing of your wife's pet pair of pony-cobs ?"

Hatzfeldt returned, shrugging ruefully:

"I had another letter from my wife about the cobs this morning. Heaven knows whether they are still alive !"

The Minister said with a touch of malice:

"It is quite certain that there has been no fresh meat in Paris now for some time. Except ass and mule-flesh at fifteen francs a pound. Dogs and cats are getting scarce, consequently *ragoût de lièvre* has become the staple dish at all the restaurants. . . ."

Hatzfeldt rejoined with a sigh:

"I am not quite sure that a little starvation would not be good for myself personally, and one or two others of the Prussian Foreign Office staff. For there is no denying we eat a great deal too much. Your Excellency knows there are few nights when we spend at the dinner-table less than two hours and a half."

The answer came:

"You should eat little for breakfast, and nothing in the middle of the day; then your stomachs would neigh and prance at the dinner-call as mine never fails to do. Sometimes you see me dine twice without ill-results,—as when I am going to the King, who keeps a bad table,—and find it necessary to fortify myself beforehand. . . ."

He broke off speaking to cough and expectorate, and Hatzfeldt, noting the deep yellow hue of his jaws and temples and forehead, and the sagging pouches under the great eyes, and the caves that his anxieties and labours

had recently dug about them; said to himself that the Chief's health was not what it had been; that any fool could see with half an eye he was terribly liverish; that he slept little and spat bile continually, and that his superhuman capacity for work, in combination with his superhuman powers of eating and drinking, was maintained at high pressure by a remorseless vanity that proved him no stronger or wiser than other men.

What was he saying in tones tinged with mockery, for he had probably taken that reference to the excess of luxury at the Foreign Office in the Rue de Provence, as a thrust directed at himself:

"If you would really like to try high living after the latest Parisian style, I have at home amongst some letters taken from a balloon captured yesterday the *menu* of a dinner given at Voisin's on the twenty-first by some rich Americans. *Potage St. Germain. . . . Côtelettes de loup chasseur. . . . Chat garni des rats rôtis, sauce poivrade: Rosbif de Chameau. . . . Salade de légumes. Cépes a la Bordelaise: Dessert; none at all. . . .* I gathered from the same source that the Government are going to take over all private stores of provisions, and that the edible animals confined in the Jardin des Plantes are to be shot and cut up for sale."

"Good-bye to poor Touti's ponies then," said the Secretary with resignation, "and possibly farewell also to my hopes of a sturdy son and heir!"

"Ah! if things are as serious as that," said the Minister, "you had better telegraph to the Countess. Prince Wittgenstein, Clarmont, and little Desjardin, Secretary of the Belgian Legation in Paris, left there yesterday morning by special permit from General Trochu. All three packed into a *coupé* belonging to Prince Croy—these equine treasures of your wife's were harnessed to the vehicle. They were to spend the night at Villeneuve St. Georges—

and you will probably find them in Versailles when we get back."

He added as the Secretary thanked him with effusiveness:

"As regards the family in the Rue de Helder and your bootmaker—the only man in the world who can turn you out properly!—you may tell them, if you are in communication with them,—that until the twenty-seventh of December they may sleep in peace. . . . As to-morrow is Christmas Eve, that means four unbroken nights of slumber. After that—the Deluge,—not of water, but of fire and steel and lead!" He added, ignoring the Secretary's start and half-suppressed exclamation: "Call to Reichardt to bring up the horses. I find it chilly—let us be getting back!"

LXXIV.

Christmas Eve came with an unloading of all the countless tons of snow that had lain pent up behind those skies of leaden grayness. The Seine froze in thin crackling patches, Paris and the surrounding country lay under two feet of snow. Kraus, Klaus, Schmidt, and Klein of the Army of United Germany told each other gleefully that it was going to be a real German Christmas, after all. Nearly every man had packed up and sent a French clock or a porcelain vase as a seasonable gift to his family in Germany, or some article of furniture of a bulkier kind. Now upon the side of the senders of these love-gifts was a great unpacking of strongly-smelling parcels directed in well-known characters, and containing cakes, sausages, pudding, loaves of black bread, cheeses, barrels of Magdeburg *sauerkraut*, and salt meat to eat with it, sweets, tobacco, cigars, and pipes. Each hospital and barracks, camp and quarters

displayed elaborate preparations for merrymaking; the most distant outpost wore a festive air. Waggonloads of holly, ivy, and mistletoe creaked over the snow. Miniature forests of fir-trees large and small had been cut down, and set up in tubs of earth for the festival.

French eyes regarded these preparations upon the part of their foes with curiosity. For Catholics there would be Midnight Mass at the churches,—by consent of the German authorities!—Holy Communion—and some sort of supper—possibly none this War-Christmas—upon the return from Church. But this setting out of tables of presents under the fir-branches adorned with coloured tapers, hung with child-rejoicing trifles such as gilt nuts and gingerbread, apples and sugar-plums; this singing of carols; Luther's "*Euch ist ein Kindlein heut geboren*," with "*Der Tannenbaum*," and "*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*," the frequent references to Santa Klaus and his sack, and the *Christkind*—apparently regarded as a benevolently disposed Puck or Brownie, was to the adult non-German inhabitants of Versailles excessively puzzling, unless they happened to be English Protestants.

Of these honest Britons there was a fair sprinkling, the majority of them being exceedingly depressed and out-at-elbows refugees from Paris, whose exodus from the city in the previous month of November had been achieved under the auspices of the British Government, and the personal superintendence of Lord Henry Fermeroy, Secretary of Lord Lyons' Embassy at Paris, armed with a safe-conduct from General Trochu.

Despite his low-bosomed vests, Imperial, and French accent, this sprig of British nobility behaved like a man. From the old lady who brought a tin bonnet-box, full of jewellery, and a case containing a stuffed pug, with the prayer that these heirlooms might be taken care of at the Embassy, and the courtesan Cora Pearl, who requested

formal permission to carry on business, during the siege, under the protection of the British Flag, as from each individual unit of the army of distressed Britishers who flocked to seek his aid or counsel, Lord Henry earned gratitude, and praise, and goodwill.

When the provisions and money subscribed to the Fund for the aid of the many destitute English residents in Paris were at an end, he did not hesitate to dip his hand into his own breeches-pocket. His shining patent-leather boots carried him not only into the attics and cellars where grim Starvation crouched on a bed of damp straw. They tripped over the Aubusson carpets of the drawing-rooms where Genteel Famine sat sipping hot water out of Sèvres cups, wherewith to quell its gnawing pangs; and retired, without having trodden upon a single corn during the accomplishment of their owner's charitable errand. He bombarded Count Bismarck with official Notes, until he had obtained permission from that grim Cerberus for his little army of refugees to pass the Prussian lines.

Of his dreary three-days' journey in charge of the string of country-carts containing the exiles, who were permitted to travel to Versailles *via* the Porte Charenton, Brie-Comte-Robert, and Corbeil, Lord Henry afterwards penned a Narrative. Which literary effort, printed, bound in cloth of a soothing green, and adorned with a Portrait of the Author, the young man bestowed upon his friends.

Perhaps you can see the blue eyes of Juliette peering between the frost-flowers encrusting the window of her bedroom on the second floor, which commanded a view of the garden of the Rue de Provence.

She had, upon the previous evening, received an intimation from the Minister that she would be permitted to take exercise regularly in the garden between the hours of nine and ten. Thus with a throbbing heart, she dressed the

shining tresses so long concealed under Madame Charles Tessier's chenille net and white shawl, and arrayed herself in the plain black silk skirt and bodice that we have seen once previously,—looped over a cloth petticoat of the same mourning hue. She sought for, found, and put on the gray velvet jacket trimmed with Persian lambskin, and the little gray toque that matched it, despoiled of its azure feather. These things, with many others, had been packed away in a trunk and stowed in the attic now occupied by Madame Potier, when Mademoiselle had departed for Belgium under the charge of Madame Tessier.

She wound a white silk scarf about her throat, tied on a veil, and found herself wishing for a knot of violets to brighten the pale, sombrely-clad reflection in the looking-glass. . . . Colour . . . and her Colonel's grave lying under the first-fallen snow. . . . She blushed deep rose for very shame of her own vanity, and then in all conscience the picture was bright enough.

The pleasaunce, like the rest of the world, lay under a mantle of sparkling whiteness. The orderlies and grooms had already cleared and scraped the paths in the vicinity of the house. The ring of the shovels and the swish of the brooms might be heard in the distance. Mademoiselle sighed, thinking of Jean Jacques Potier.

Then timidly she stole down by the back-staircase and passed through the hall-door into a world all glittering. The keen air was as exhilarating as champagne. It breathed on her cheeks, and renewed the roses that had bloomed there when she had frowned at the girl in the mirror. The frost kissed her eyes, and they sparkled like sapphire-tinted icicles. She tripped down the short curved avenue, passed the gardener's cottage and turned into the kitchen-garden. Not that she was looking for anybody there.

All through the autumn and winter in a sheltered corner

had bloomed a large standard rose-tree of the hardy, late-flowering kind. The storms of October had passed over and left its fragrant pink blooms unscathed, the bitter winds and night frosts of November had done no more than brown the edges of an outer petal. The tree in its fragrance and beauty. and its strange immunity from hurt of wind and weather, had been an unfailing source of pleasure to Juliette. When an overblown flower shed its leaves, she had gathered up and kept them. When a new bud plumped and bravely unfolded, her heart had known a delicate thrill of joy.

So Mademoiselle went on into the kitchen-garden, whose paths had not been cleared of snow. There was her tree—standing in its corner, but buried to the lower branches in a drift that had formed in this sheltered angle of the southward wall.

The roses had met their match at last. Drooping and yellow, sodden and heavy, they had no more courage or hope to give away. Juliette kissed both her hands to them, in farewell, and turned to encounter P. C. Breagh.

The green-baize apron and other integuments of the late Jean Jacques Potier had been replaced by the old brown Norfolk suit so often mentioned in these pages. It had been sedulously brushed, and his linen was scrupulously white, and he had bestowed infinite pains upon the knot of the black silk, loose-ended tie. His cropped hair would grow again, and his broad red smear of eyebrow was echoed on his upper lip by a young, but decidedly red moustache with rather fuzzy corners. The pleasant lips smiled at sight of her and a hot flame leapt into the gray-and-amber eyes. Her own could not be likened to sapphire icicles now. They were tender, and her upper lip was haunted by flying smiles that came, and vanished, and came again.

"It is you! Ah, my friend," she said, "I am so glad—I am so glad!"

He caught the gloved hands she stretched out to him,

and held them in his, that were reddened with Jean Jacques Potier's labours, and kissed them eagerly. The little gray gloves were not buttoned,—his warm lips feasted unchecked upon each blue-veined wrist, until she told him, breathlessly:

"No more!—there must be no more! . . . Pray cease, my friend!"

She had withdrawn her hands. . . . He said with a catch in his breath and with eyes that implored her:

"I do not offend you? . . ."

She looked at him full and drew off one glove and laid the bare hand in his extended palm. Warm and soft, it seemed incredibly small as it lay there. The touch of it infused a melting sweetness, a thrill went through the man from head to foot. Perhaps the thrill was communicated, for she drew her hand away quickly. She said:

"You are very generous to one who has so often deceived you. . . . How many times I have condemned myself for my wickedness, thinking: 'Of all those noble deeds I have described in the letters, not one has been really performed by M. Charles Tessier. . . . All are invented to make a good face!"

He said in a whisper:

"I could forgive you for making even a worse fool of me—now I know you never were married! It was you telling me that knocked me out of time. . . . Nothing else mattered much afterwards. . . . You said to Monseigneur yesterday that it was to retain your place in this house you pretended to be the wife of its master. But why did you pretend it in the first place to *me?*"

She began to change colour from pale to red, and tried to free her hand. It was impossible. He said:

"I mean to know. . . . I have the right to know! . . ."

She faltered:

"See you well, Monsieur, I cannot explain! . . ."

He said doggedly:

"Then I shall explain it for you. You told me that to make me jealous! Now, did you not?"

She winced.

"Monsieur . . . not then! . . . Upon my faith I assure you. . . . See you well, I had promised my father that M. Charles should be my husband. . . . I would have kept that promise *à tout hasard* . . . had M. Charles not married Mademoiselle Basselôt. And so I told you I was married, not then to make you jealous . . . that came after. But to make it . . . possible to be true!"

He almost reeled under the sudden shock of the terrible, exquisite confession. He would have given a year of life to let himself go with the sweet roaring current that tumbled foaming through his veins and sent its red sparkling bubbles to his brain. But there were steps and voices on the other side of the high laurel hedge that divided the kitchen-garden from the pleasaunce. He recognised Bismarck-Bohlen's snigger and Hatzfeldt's lazy, well-bred accents,—telling an anecdote of the Minister, one could not doubt. The languid voice reached their ears distinctly. It said:

"He was an officer of French Imperial Hussars, who had been taken prisoner at Sedan, and had broken his *parole*. He had been taken again in arms against us, fighting under General Chanzy at Le Mans. So she comes post-haste to Versailles, lays siege to the King, who will not see her—to the Crown Prince, who will not see her—and finally to Moltke, who will not see her, because all three of them are cowards at the sight of a woman's tears! Finally the Chief consents to receive her. . . . It was yesterday, in his room at the Préfecture. She comes in—all in black, which to a blonde of her type is very suitable, full of hope at not being made to *croquer le marmot* for long. She reels off a long tale about her Frédéric, his bravery and his excellent heart. The Chief listens sympathetically, looking at

the clock from time to time. Again the heart is pressed upon his notice. It is heavy with grief at the thought of a life-parting from Madame, who is Frédéric's mistress, by the way—and not his wife ! . . . It is weighed down with suspense at the delay of the Prussian *Kriegsrath* in answering the loved-one's prayer. . . . She gets so far, when the Chief looks up at the clock, and says, touching his table-bell : ' Madame, that excellent heart of your client is even heavier than it was five minutes ago. . . .' ' How, Monseigneur ?' cries Madame. ' He was shot,' says the Chief, ' just now when I looked up at the clock. And as a rule, seven out of the ten bullets shot off by the firing-party are found to have lodged in the region of the heart !' So the poor woman screamed and fainted. They carried her past me with her teeth set and all her fine hair hanging down. . . ."

Bismarck-Bohlen's snigger greeted the *dénouement*. The footsteps grew fainter. Juliette and Breagh exchanged glances. She said with white lips:

" Monseigneur can be merciless ! And yet, when I heard him tell my mother that did he know of my hiding-place he would not betray it, I said to myself, ' *How you have misjudged this man !*' "

Her comrade had started at the reference to Madame de Bayard, remembering the rendezvous to be kept that night. Juliette went on, with a liquid look:

" Monsieur, I have a favour to ask of you. . . . All those weeks when I struggled with that purpose from which you tried so faithfully to dissuade me, I did not once dare to set foot in Our Lord's House. But when I threw away that wicked bottle, I found that I could pray once more. . . . I went to the Carmelite Fathers and made my confession. . . . I received Our Lord in the Holy Communion, and my soul began to be at peace again. Now it is Christmas Eve and I should much like to attend the Midnight High

Mass, or the Second Mass at daybreak, and I had intended to ask you to take me, but I am upon *parole*. . . . Therefore I entreat of you—pray for me when you make your own Communion. How much I need Divine pardon and guidance, even you can hardly know. . . ."

His conscience stung. He had not intended to evade the sacred obligation, yet he had wavered as to when he should comply with the command of the Church. He said:

"It shall be as you ask. I shall attend High Mass at the Church of the Carmelites at midnight. Afterwards I have an appointment—at a place some distance from here."

"So late, Monsieur ?"

Her glance had not only surprise in it, but fear for him. He said lightly:

"Very late. . . . I may not get back until—some time near the second breakfast. . . . Madame Potier will have some hot coffee ready for me. . . ."

She flushed and knitted her small hands together anxiously. She asked:

"Could you not—could you not take me into your confidence ?"

He said bluntly:

"Not without myself committing a breach of confidence! . . ." He added, holding out his strong hand, "Try to trust me. If it were possible to tell you, I would do it, you must know !"

"I know it, and I trust you, Monsieur, always! . . ."

There was faith in her eyes. He kissed her hands and released them, and turned with her silently. . . . They walked back together as far as the house.

LXXV.

At six o'clock, when the snow had ceased falling and the old moon of December glowed redly through a thinning veil of frost-fog, the Crown Prince arrived to dine with the Minister.

The Heir-Apparent of Prussia came with an Escort of Dragoons of the Bodyguard, driving with one of his *aides-de-camp* in a closed sledge belonging to the exiled Empress, an exquisite vehicle, finished like an enamelled *bonbonnière,* supplied with a great white Polar bearskin, and drawn by two superb black Orloff stallions, whose glossy coats had the burnish of old Italian armour in the ruddy light of torches held by orderlies and grooms.

The Minister, followed by Hatzfeldt and his Chief Privy Councillor, went down bareheaded, between a double row of Chancery attendants, dressed in their new dark-blue liveries, with black velvet facings, to welcome his Crown Prince. The broad breast of "Unser Fritz" displayed the Order *Pour la Mérite,* the First-Class of the Iron Cross, and the Red Eagle, with an English Order, bestowed by Queen Victoria upon her son-in-law. He sported new shoulder-straps, distinctive of his newly-conferred rank as Field-Marshal, and cut a very gallant figure, as may be supposed.

Perhaps you can see him at the head of the long table in the dining-room of the Tessier mansion, his Chancellor and host upon his left hand. Upon his right sat the Bavarian plenipotentiary, Count Maltzahn. Count Holnstein, another Bavarian Minister, but newly-arrived from Munich with a letter from his King, and the Bavarian Minister of War, von Pranky, were severally disposed according to their degrees. Prince Putbus was there, and a certain Herr von Zadowski, a large red-faced man in a green

Hussar uniform, wearing a white patch with a red Cross, the badge of the Knights of St. John, and the Iron Cross, was also present; and the Secretaries and Privy Councillors filled the lower end of the board; sporting the new Foreign Office uniform of dark blue, with black velvet side-stripes to the trousers, and a black-velvet-collared, double-buttoned military frock. Sword-belts and black-hilted swords with gold knots, caused the more stout and elderly among the Councillors infinite discomfort, to the secret but acute delight of Bismarck-Bohlen and Count Hatzfeldt. The dinner, composed of love-gifts from admiring German patriots to their Chancellor, was of a quality, quantity, lusciousness, and length, calculated, as Privy Councillor Bucher piously whispered to a neighbour, "to make a guest imagine himself a banqueter in Abraham's bosom before the time."

Long before his table-companions had reached the zenith of their sensuous enjoyment, the Crown Prince had finished his temperate meal. The Chancellor commented mentally, glancing at the clear, rather set features of the great golden-bearded figure seated beside him:

"Fritz is endeavouring to impress myself and these Bavarians, with whom it rests to decide whether he is Emperor or no Emperor, *par la fermeté de son attitude* with regard to the pleasures of the table, and by the Spartan simplicity of his habits and tastes. How I should like to offer him black broth and barley-bread in a special wooden bowl and platter. But that, I suppose, would be *lèse-majesté.*"

And closely emulated by von Holnstein and von Pranky, he gave free rein to his Gargantuan appetite, taking twice of nearly every course, and washing the huge meal down, as was his habit, with floods from Rheims and Épernay.

When the cloth was drawn and fresh relays of wine ap-

peared, the Prince accepted but a single glass of *fine-champagne* with his coffee. When the costly cigars were offered, he pulled from his pocket a porcelain pipe bearing his crest and monogram, painted and sent him by his English wife as a Christmas present, and said:

"I should prefer to smoke this, if Your Excellency does not mind?"

Dinner over, His Royal Highness, with the Bavarians and the Minister, repaired to the salon. Overhead, Mademoiselle de Bayard, lonely in her prison-bedroom on the second-floor, heard their voices; deep, sonorous bass, shrill tenor, and penetrating, resonant baritone, engaged in discussion or joining in argument. At ten o'clock the Prince took leave, attended to his vehicle as previously by the Chancellor; to whom he said, in a low tone, as he pressed his hand:

"We are now no longer North Germans, but Germans. I shall urge upon my father the speedy proclamation of the Empire with all external state. Names, arms, titles, colours place us before the world in a proper light. I have never coveted a Crown Imperial. I denounce the idea of a bombardment as brutal and unnecessary. But I am willing to reap all the honours and advantages that can be gained from our victory. Impress this upon my father, who treats pomp and solemnity with indifference. As to demanding the old crown of Charlemagne from Vienna, I do not at all see the necessity for that. But I shall write to my wife to-night!"

And *Unser Fritz* got into the exquisite sledge that had been given to the beautiful Empress by the Third Napoleon, and was whirled away in a glittering dust of snow, kicked up by the fiery Orloffs' heels. And the Chancellor, recovering from his deep, ceremonious bow, wheeled and went back up the steps, with his bald head glittering in the ruddy torchlight. . . . None might guess what savage

triumph swelled the heart beating under his white full-dress uniform, upon this night that set upon the fabric of the man's colossal labours the coping-stone of Success.

The Bavarian plenipotentiaries took leave within ten minutes. Count Hatzfeldt had been summoned to the salon a few moments previously. When the unseen bustle of their departure had subsided, the Secretaries and Councillors, smoking and drinking tea in the dining-room, were unexpectedly joined by the Minister.

All rose up as he suddenly opened the folding-doors, thrust in his head and shoulders, and surveyed them, smiling. Behind him was Hatzfeldt, pale and excited, and with eyes that seemed dancing out of his head. There was a silence of expectation, then the great figure moved to the table, and men scattered to make space for him as though his contact might have slain.

He wore full-dress White Cuirassier uniform, without the steel cuirass, and the First and Second Classes of the Iron Cross, and the Red Eagle, with the peculiar decoration that he always sported, and which had been given him in his young manhood for saving life. His bald forehead and great domed cranium were studded with shining drops of perspiration, under his tufted brows his blue eyes blazed with a triumph almost fearful; his straight-bridged, snub-ended nose, thick cheeks, and bulldog jowl, were crimson and dripping. He drew out his handkerchief and wiped them—and the hand that held the linen palpably trembled. He said to them all, and they held their breath to hear:

"Gentlemen, the Bavarian business is settled, and everything signed and sealed. We have got our German Unity —and our German Empire!"

There was a deep silence for a moment, broken by Busch's request to be allowed to take the pens with which the treaty had been signed. He got permission.

"That little Busch," said the Minister, "will never lose

anything for want of a tongue! If he thinks to find there the gold pen set with brilliants, that was sent me by the Hamburg jeweller, he is mistaken. Come!" he added, "this is a great occasion!" and bade Hatzfeldt ring for a servant and order up more champagne.

The wine was brought and opened. He said to the servant who officiated:

"Let the house-steward know that some wine is to be sent to the clerks and decipherers in their room. The servants also are to have what they like best for drinking—I fancy Niederstedt will choose Old Nordhausen. But—short of my best liquor, let what each likes best be given to him. No!—not that glass. I will drink out of my biggest goblet! . . ."

With the fizzing bumper in hand, he waited until all had been served, looking, as he reared his great bulk at the head of the full table, the biggest man, mentally and physically, who had ever served the Hohenzollern. In his most powerful tones he called the toast:

"*Hoch!* to His Imperial Majesty, our Kaiser Wilhelm!" Every man there strained his lungs to the utmost, but the great bull-voice of the Chancellor drowned every other there.

He talked a little more. "We should never have hooked the King of Bavaria, but for the pluck of Holnstein, who set off from Munich to tackle His Most Gracious at his Palace of Neuschwanstein, and,—there being no railway—made in six days a journey of eighteen German miles on foot and on horseback over mountain passes, agreeably diversified by forest-tracks and timber-roads."

He drank and went on:

"He arrived, to find His Majesty nursing his toothache in absolute solitude, invisible to human eyes, save those belonging to the dentist, his valets and fiddlers and grooms. At first the King refused to receive him, but Holnstein was

clever enough to gain over the dentist to deliver a letter from his own hand, and incidentally one written by myself. . . ."

He went on with a smile that curved the great moustache into lines of gaiety:

"Knowing myself particularly detested by King Ludwig, I had taken pains to make my letter acceptable. I said in it that my family had enjoyed the patronage of his family a trifle of five hundred years ago. I mentioned that reinstitution in the Wittelsbach good graces had been the object of my whole life's labours. I incidentally pressed the claims of the King of Prussia to be made Emperor of Germany. I enclosed with many apologies, the draft of a letter which expressed the concurrence of Bavaria. 'Your Majesty has only to copy this and sign it,' I added, 'and the troublesome business is closed!' What a prospect to a monarch afflicted by an obstinately-throbbing gumboil! There was no paper or pen at hand with which to answer, so the dentist presented his patient with a sheet out of his pocket-book, and the patent ink-reservoir pen with which he writes his prescriptions. King Ludwig sits up in bed, scrawls a copy of my draft reply, and the German Empire is made. . . . The Festival of the Orders and the Proclamation of the Emperor will come off in the Great Hall of Versailles upon a certain date not far off. . . . I will leave you to guess what the date is likely to be! . . ."

In the midst of a deafening tumult of joyful outcries and congratulations, he turned his great eyes upon one excited face after another, and drained his capacious glass and set it down.

"And with all this, gentlemen, our hopes might have foundered. . . . The Royal sign-manual might have availed us nothing! . . . the Treaty might never have been signed! . . . Everything has depended upon a question

as trivial and ridiculous as indeed are most of our human vanities. Imagine the gravity of the question at issue! Whether the Bavarian officers are in future to wear the marks of their military rank upon their collars as heretofore, or on their shoulders like us North Germans? . . . Upon that the German Empire has dangled, do you hear? Ah! how many times," he said, "I have been tempted to break out and tell those fellows in the devil's name to sew their stars and badges on the seats of their breeches! But I comforted myself with the old adage: *Politeness as far as the last step of the gallows, but hanging for all that!*"

They roared with laughter. He called:

"Fresh bottles! A little excess may be pardoned, upon this of all the nights in the year. Really, I need a buck-up after all that I have suffered, what with this Bavarian business, with Gortchakoff's Note, and the bumptiousness of the English, who without knowing why or wherefore, are bellowing for War. All that danger has been avoided by the exercise of a little diplomacy. . . . But how can we expect to be taken seriously by the Powers when we procrastinate in the matter of the Paris Bombardment—which ought to begin at once!"

There was a hubbub of acquiescence, from which only the voices of Hatzfeldt and Abeken were missing.

Bismarck-Bohlen begged leave to propose a toast. The Minister asked, tolerantly regarding his young relative, who vibrated with suppressed hiccups, and was palpably unsteady upon his long legs:

"What is this toast we are to drink?"

Bismarck-Bohlen, in labour with speech, got out with a final effort:

"The—*hic!*—bombar—*hic!*—ment! Big—*hic!*—potarroes for Paris!"

"Ah, as God lives!" he said to them, "I must drink that toast!"

It went round. Hatzfeldt followed with:

"Our glorious Chancellor!"

"Our glorious Chancellor! Our great, ineffable, powerful Kaiser-maker! *Hoch!* the Fürst von Bismarck-Schönhausen, Imperial Germany's master-mind!"

Sobs mingled with their acclamations. Their faces were now purple-red, with the exception of Hatzfeldt's, which was ghastly; and Bismarck-Bohlen's, which presented a combination of shades, in which pea-green and orange predominated, as, bathed in tears, he staggered to embrace his august relative. He was turned off with a single jerk of the Minister's wrist, to fall weeping on the bosom of Privy Councillor Abeken, who, shocked at finding himself involved in something approaching to an orgie, was in the act of escaping from the room.

"My thanks for the toast!" said the resonant voice in their dulled and singing ears, "but pray all remember that I am no longer the North German Chancellor, or even the Chancellor of the Germanic Federation, but Chancellor of the German Empire, which has a better sound! And this is now, or will be by the New Year,—the Imperial German Chancellory, and Foreign Office, while you, my friends, are Imperial Privy Councillors, Secretaries, and so on. We will baptize your green honours in a fresh round of champagne, and then I must leave you. I have yet before me some hours of hard work, and must keep my head clear and cool."

He held his great glass to the now drunken servant to be filled up.

"*Prosit!*" he said, and lifted the capacious vessel high, and tossed off the wine and dashed the costly goblet into the fireplace, where it exploded in crystal fragments and sparkling dust. Had they tried, his satellites could not have followed his example. Their leaden arms could only lift the wine to their dribbly lips. They drank—and one

by one each toper collapsed and buckled as though the solid oak floor had given way under his boneless feet. Hatzfeldt sank prone across a chair. Bismarck-Bohlen had rolled under the table some moments previously, where, judging by the ominous nature of the sounds that asserted his presence, Madame Tessier's Brussels carpet was suffering for his excess. Similar noises, stertorous snores were re-echoed from other quarters as the Minister surveyed his fallen warriors:

"Men cannot drink in these days!" he commented, and left the room.

LXXVI.

He threw on his cap and his great white cavalry cloak lined with Russian sables, and passed out by the front-door into the still white night. The snowstorm was over, the fall had lessened to the merest sprinkle. The bitter northerly wind no longer drove the blizzards screaming before it, each tree stood immovable under its burden, the overloaded evergreen bushes lay flat upon the ground. And the moon sailed high, drifting away eastwards. Through the tatters of the frost-fog shone the great blazing jewels of the stars.

Twelve o'clock struck near and far, and from the great Cathedral of the Place St. Louis, as from every bell-graced tower and steeple in Versailles, rang the Christmas carillon. Many voices broke upon the piercing, windless quiet. Many footsteps were passing through the snowy streets. Catholics were going to the Midnight Mass and Communion —to be celebrated by permission of the Prussian Minister. He pictured the crowds that would flock to the great churches of Paris—how Nôtre Dame would be packed to the doors, and Ste. Genéviève, also the great Church of the

Carmelites, and the ancient church of the Augustine Fathers in the Place des Victoires.

He imagined the flower-decked High Altars in the churches and chapels of Versailles, thronged about with war-weary, famine-bitten refugees and residents. German Catholics would mingle with them,—the conqueror and the conquered kneeling side by side. Wounded soldiers of both nations would help each other to limp to the Communion-rail; the atmosphere of the hushed, crowded sanctuaries would throb and vibrate with prayer. . . .

For what boon would all these suppliants entreat High Heaven most fervently? Pacing in and out of the snowy garden alleys, his giant shadow passing over the moveless tree-shadows, he asked himself the question. There was but one reply.

For Peace. . . . They would pray to God for the Peace that Bismarck was not going to give them yet awhile. . . . Under the icicles that had formed on his great moustache he laughed. And a Satanic pride swelled within him as he told himself that this was his crowning hour of life.

The wild sweet frenzy of the bells was dying down. Distant refrains of sturdy German carols came from the military quarters and the barracks. The bells stopped, wavered, broke out again, grew faint and were still. And it seemed to the man standing in the chill silence of the snowy garden, as though he heard the Spirit of France and the Spirit of Germany communing in the depths of this Christmas Night.

It was the voice of France that wept:

"*Alas, miserable that I am, what hast thou done to me? Why have thy fierce hordes rolled down upon me from the strange Pagan lands in the inclement East? Was it my fame, or my wealth, or my beauty that tempted thy Hunnish warriors, the yellow-haired footmen, with hard, blue-eyed faces and huge hairy limbs, and the uncouth, fierce, tanned horsemen, who ride*

as though they were one with their beasts? Woe is me! for my white breasts that were kissed by the conquering Roman! must I yield them again to be bruised by the ravishing Frank? A curse on thee! thou treacherous, deep-flowing, swift river, that hast again proved no barrier to the Prussian invader! I am fallen a prey to the Confederation set up by the Corsican upon the Rhine. Oh! hard as the nether millstone! Wilt thou unpitying, behold Famine devour my beauty? See, the white limbs that show through my tattered garment are fleshless. No man who looks upon me would desire me more! For what hast thou dug a pit about me and set up thy terrible war-engines? Was I not willing to make terms with thee, as the conqueror?"

It was the voice of Germany that answered:

"O Gaulish Queen! thou wert willing, but not for the conquered is it to appoint the sum of the ransom, or hold parley with the victors regarding the price of blood! Hearest thou, O fallen one? I withdraw my triumphant legions when it pleases me. This is a land where the wine and the women are luscious. When we have drunken deep enough, we shall load ourselves with spoils and treasure and go. Yet ere I withdraw I shall have known thee as a lover, whose desire is kindled the fiercer because of thy hate. Death shall be the priest who celebrates our espousals. He shall unite us with a ring of steel and fire. Then I depart, leaving thee to the enemies of thine own household, who shall wreak thee greater ruin than thy foes. But a child shall be born of thy long resistance and my fierce triumph and our brief mingling, who shall be called Peace! Hearest thou, O France?"

He listened, standing on the hard-frozen, white-powdered garden path between the swept-up snow-mounds. There was no answer. He returned, stamping the snow from his clogged spurs, to the house.

The door stood open as he had left it. The even tread of the sentries came from the Rue de Provence. He had

heard the guard being changed at the entrance-gates and beyond the wall at the bottom of the garden. Those without were vigilant if those within were not. He remembered, noting the absence of the usual Chancery attendant from the hall-bench, that he had given permission to the servants, without distinction, to make merry upon this night. He could hear no clinking of glasses and bottles below-stairs. Perhaps sleep had overtaken them as it had the revellers in the dining-room. He softly opened the double-doors of that apartment. A stench combined of stale tobacco, spilt wine and alcoholic humanity offended his nose, and he withdrew it. But not before he had ascertained that with the exception of Abeken, who had left early, and Count Hatzfeldt, who must have been taken home—the Staff slept there.

He looked into the drawing-room. The fire lay in gray ashes between the fire-dogs. On the table lay the signed Treaty with Bavaria. He picked it up and rolled it, looking at the mantelshelf, where the bat-winged bronze demon brooded over the ormolu clock.

The room, whose hearth was cold, whose windows, closely shuttered, bolted and blinded, had the curtains drawn close over them, was lighted by a yellow ray shining through the glass door opening into the conservatory. He crossed to this door and looked through. Commendably sober, the two officers of the guard of Green Jaegers who were quartered here, sat chatting in whispers and smoking by the stove. Between them on an upturned tub-bottom, stood a little, twinkling, taper-lit Christmas tree.

"Von Uslar! Bleichröder! . . ."

The Minister opened the glass door and looked in. The officers sprang to their feet and stood saluting him. He smiled at the little tree, and asked, nodding at the door at the end of the conservatory, leading to a room where the

library of the late M. Tessier had peaceably mouldered until the clerks and decipherers of the Prussian Foreign Office had been assigned it for their quarters:

"Have those fellows yet gone to bed?"

And even as he queried he knew by the peculiar smile upon the faces of Captain von Uslar and his subaltern, that the scene in the dining-room was repeated here. He said with a shrug:

"Oh, well! . . . They had my permission to make a night of it. One would like to be sure, though, that there are no candles to upset!"

The junior officer moved to the library-door and opened it, setting free a puff of hot air laden with wine-fumes, and a chorus of snores ranging from piping alto to deep bass. Nothing could be seen except the vague outlines of prostrate bodies, revealed by a pale gleam of moonlight that made its way down the chimney and shone upon the dead ashes of the hearth.

"Shall I wake anybody?" queried the lieutenant's look. The Minister made a sign in the negative, bade a pleasant good-night to the two officers and withdrew, shutting the glass door. He quitted the drawing-room, went into the hall, tried the fastenings of the hall-door, and crossed to the hatchway under the main staircase that led to the kitchen quarters. A gas-jet was flaring in a draught at the bottom of the staircase. He went down, regulated the light as he passed to a safer volume, and tried the handle of the door leading to what had been a housekeeper's parlour, and was now used by the house-steward and the Chancery attendants as an upper servants' hall. A gaselier of flaring jets revealed five persons in here, wrapped in the heavy sleep of drunkenness. One, the house-steward, snored, recumbent on a sofa; Grams and Engelberg, those monuments of rigid respectability, reposed with their heads and shoulders resting on the table, appropriately decorated

with empty bottles and upset glass beakers, and in the centre of which stood a great china bowl.

The Minister peeped into this vessel curiously. Apples stuck with cloves, and cinnamon-sticks left high and dry at the bowl-bottom testified to the Yuletide correctness of the punch, brewed by the skilled hand of the Foreign Office cook. He, the artist responsible for the dinner which had astonished the three Bavarian plenipotentiaries, leaned back, slumbering profoundly in a high-backed arm-chair. A china pipe, gaily tasselled and painted, drooped from one side of his relaxed mouth. His feet rested upon the sprawling back of the gigantic Niederstedt, who had gone to sleep upon a sheepskin rug in front of the wood-stove. His huge right hand still grasped an empty bottle that had contained his favourite Old Nordhausen. He opened one eye as the Minister stooped to inspect him—uttered a stertorous snort, and relapsed again into his hoggish Nirvana, leaving the Minister, as he deliberately turned out the gas and quitted the steward's room, to realise, that save himself, the two officers smoking in the winter-garden, and the women presumably sleeping on the second floor, the house whose outer precincts were so vigilantly guarded, did not contain a sober head.

"Well, well! A bout of drunkenness may well be condoned in the servants when the master himself gave the signal for revelry!"

He told himself so, smiling as he made the round of the basement house-doors. Nothing had disturbed his equanimity saving the discovery that Niederstedt was incapable of speech or movement. For with his strange characteristic mingling of audacity and caution, the Minister, while leaving Mademoiselle de Bayard practically free within the house-limits, had insured by private orders that the giant East Prussian should sleep henceforth outside his master's bedroom door.

Again, as the master's long strides carried him upstairs to the hall again, and he took his bedroom candle from the row on the Empire console, he knew a moment of inward fret. There was nobody to help him undress, and put away his clothes. Wherever Fate and the Intendant General had assigned the Minister's sleeping-quarters, the deft Grams, or the attentive Engelberg had always appeared—or failing these the stolid Niederstedt—to render these and other personal services, the lack of which after long use, are keenly felt.

It was a hellish nuisance to a middle-aged man to have to get himself out of his full-dress uniform. One grew hot at the mere thought of unfastening the shoulder-belt and sword-belt, collar-hooks, buckles, swivels and so on. Last but not least, the final wrestle with the polished, spurred jack-boots. . . .

"God be thanked! I am not wearing the cuirass!" he said to himself devoutly, as he laid hand upon his bedroom door.

It swung back, and then his vexation passed from him. On a little table near the hearthside, where yet some embers of a fire glowed redly, stood a little gaily-caparisoned Christmas tree. Under its branches, adorned with red-and-white tapers as yet unlighted, lay the gifts that came from home.

He crossed the room in two long steps and stood smiling before the little fir-tree. The purplish-redness died out of his great cheeks and jowl, the congested veins no longer stood out like ropes upon his throat and temples. The great eyes that had blazed with Satanic pride softened into tenderness, as he picked up the gifts one by one and looked at them.

"From His Daughter to Papachen," said an embroidered tobacco-pouch. "From Bill" and "From Herbert" a gold fusee-box and a smoker's knife were respectively

labelled. "From thy wife Johanna" was written on a slip of paper attached to the case that contained a handsome cup of Tula ware. He turned the cup in his hands many times before he returned it to its outer husk. He said fondly, familiarly, as though the giver were standing beside him.

"Little thou carest, thou good heart!—whether thou art wife to a Chancellor of the North German Confederation, or the Chancellor of the German Empire. One object in life thou hast—and that is, to get the old man home again!" After a moment he added, pitching the Bavarian Treaty on the centre-table, unhooking and removing his sword-belt and throwing it on the couch: "Babel must be bombarded, or thou wilt not be pleased with me . . . am I not a good pupil, to have learned my lesson so well?"

The shoulder-belt came off with a slight degree of twisting and fumbling. He laid it aside, and moved to the shaving glass, and by its aid unfastened from his collar-swivel the Iron Cross. "Good!" he commented, and laid it on top of a despatch-box on the centre-table. Then he began slowly and methodically to unfasten the other Orders from his breast. As he pricked a finger with the pin of one in wrenching at it angrily, it occurred to him that it would have been perfectly feasible to have removed his dress-tunic with all its decorations, and this discovery stung him to wrath.

"*Kreuzdonnerwetter!*—am I then such a sheep's-head?" he said angrily to himself. Something dropped upon the floor with a tinkle and rolled away merrily under a chair, leaving its owner with the thick silver pin that had secured it, gripped between his finger and thumb. It was the medallion bestowed upon him in '42 for an act of gallantry, the obverse a shield of silver on a circle, bearing a red-enamelled Prussian eagle, and on the reverse the inscription: "*Für Rettung aus Gefahr.*"

The pin remained in his hand. Cursing his own clumsiness, he took the lighted candle he had placed upon the centre-table upon entering, and stooped to recover the evasive prize. Both hands were required for the task, that was quickly apparent. Half unconsciously, he reverted to a habit for which his wife had often playfully scolded him,—nipped the broken silver pin between his teeth and bent down to resume his search upon the floor.

As he stooped, the detonation of a driving-charge and the deafening roar and shriek of a huge shell were followed by an ear-splitting explosion. His practised ear told him that the shell had been fired from the Fortress of St. Valérien. Half-a-dozen others followed in rapid succession. No alarm-trumpet sounded. Dogs barked, near and far, the echoes of the cannonade rattled among the woods and high grounds, then died out. He said to himself: "Those sugar-plums have done damage somewhere near St. Germain. . . . Now then, where is this runaway medal ?"

As he queried a sudden spasm of the windpipe shot him to the perpendicular. He coughed and hawked as he had never done before. With a hand upon his side he coughed, straining horribly. With streaming, starting eyes he coughed, clutching at his throat.

And then, with a sudden stab of pain beneath the uvula and a strangling access of coughing he realised that a familiar home prediction had been fulfilled:

"*Otto, you will certainly swallow that pin ! . . .*"

He could almost hear the voice of his wife speaking. How absurd ! he thought, and laughed, and the agony in his lacerated gullet brought on a fit of choking worse than those that had gone before. He seized the candle and held it to his face before the shaving-mirror, opening his powerful jaws to their widest and straining his eyes that were too blind with tears to see his own swollen, discoloured features. He spat furiously, ejecting showers of saliva streaked with

blood, but not the obstacle that was choking him. . . . He thrust his hand into his mouth, and groped as far down his throat as his fingers could reach—all to no avail. . . .

"*Help!* . . . ."

He gasped the word, realising that if no help came, he was a dead man. And he seized the bell-rope and rang furiously, until the rope came down in his hand as had that of the reception-room a day or so previously, followed by a long trail of rusty wire that when tugged evoked no metal clang below.

"Help! For the love of God!" he croaked, and whirling vertigo seized him. Whooping with a dreadful croupy intake, he tripped over a footstool, and fell upon his hands and knees, and struggled up again in a last strangling effort, and staggered to the door.

The door-handle seemed to stick, or could it be that his grasp had lost its power? In the light of the gas and his yet flaring candle he looked at his knuckles and saw that they were turning blackish blue. . . . A wave of blackness rose and fell, swamping consciousness. He emerged from drowning waters, and found himself upon the landing, gripping some round object that proved to be the wrenched-off door-handle, and moaning in the whisper that he thought a shout:

"Help, help, help! . . ."

Bismarck, the man whom Kings and Emperors meant when they spoke of Prussia—the great Minister who had made three Wars—was dying. Would no one come? Not one of those who loved the man, would ever know the true story of his sordid, solitary ending. . . . Not one of those who hated him, but would hear every ugly detail of it, and recount it for others, smiling at its grim, grotesque absurdity. . . .

Choked by a pin. . . . An end rather less noble for a

great Chancellor than being run over by a donkey-cart, or smothered in a midden-pit full of liquid manure. . . .

Someone was groaning horribly, close beside him. Deep ruckling, gasping groans with a rattle and a catch midway. Were they his own death-groans ? What was this ? The walls were melting and vanishing. Clear, vivid, definite, there unrolled before his filming eyes a picture of Varzin, his Pommeranian country home. It was Spring. The dark pines about the house shone as though newly varnished. The larches were caparisoned with tassels of pale green. The blue sky was vivid as Persian turquoise. He saw his daughter in a white dress, step out from the low wide porch and stand smiling upon the terrace. She had a bunch of primroses in her belt, and his great hound Tyras had followed her, and was rubbing his great head against her sleeve.

" Dying !" he tried to say to her. " Help your father !" . . . But it seemed to him that he uttered nothing but a groan. There was a thundering in his ears like the noise of a field-battery. His great bulk reeled towards her. . . . He pitched forwards and fell heavily. He heard a scared voice crying " Monseigneur ! . . ." and knew no more.

LXXVII.

JULIETTE had not gone to bed, this snowy night of the Noël. She had said her Rosary and waited until the Christmas carillon. Then she knelt and prayed for her own pardon, for light and guidance, for a blessing upon those living friends she held most dear, for the souls of the beloved departed. And then she had waited, pacing solitary in her bedroom or sitting by her fire, for the sound of Breagh's return.

Madame Potier had gone to the Midnight Mass at the Cathedral. There would be crowds of communicants—she might not reach home before three. And in her absence had Juliette wished to sleep, sleep would have been banished by the sounds of revelry going on in the regions below-stairs.

Those first shouts for the Kaiser had been followed by others for the Chancellor. Even in her remote eyrie she could hear the clinking of glasses and the popping of corks. Then after a wild outburst of cheering she had seen, peeping between the frost-flowers on her window into the snowy, moonlit garden, the great figure in the white Cuirassier cloak move down the path between the snow-laden trees.

She was possessed by a great sense of loneliness, and a vague unreal sensation of living somebody else's life, and not the life proper of Juliette Bayard. She locked her door and built up the fire to a cheerful hearth-blaze, and sat upon the rug in her white dressing-gown, combing and brushing her glorious hair.

Never again need those superb waves of jet-black spun silk be confined in the chenille net of Madame Charles Tessier. One could be charming if one chose—there was no grim reason for being ugly, thought Mademoiselle, as she brushed and brushed. . . .

What was that ?

So strange a sound from below that she dropped comb and hairbrush and sprang to her feet quivering. . . . She had heard such a groan uttered when the lance of the Uhlan had plunged through the body of my Cousin Boisset. . . .

Again ! . . . the sound of a door thrust violently open. Heavy footsteps thudded on the gaslit landing of the next floor, and a muffled voice cried out as though for help.

A man's voice. . . . Again it cried. No voice sounded

in answer. She unlocked her door, and set her foot upon the stairs.

A few steps down. . . . Then she saw him, the tottering giant with the distorted, blue face, and the open mouth that trickled with saliva and blood. What had befallen Juliette's enemy and France's pitiless oppressor? His huge staring eyes were fixed on her. Tears rolled from them as the deep groans issued from his gaping mouth and his broad chest heaved and laboured vainly for air. "*Choking! Help!*" his gesture seemed to say to her, and a terrible shudder convulsed her as the huge body crashed down prone at her feet.

With a strange mingling of pity and aversion she knelt down beside him and looked at him closely by the light of the flaring gas-jet that illuminated the landing and stairs.

He had turned a little in falling. His blackening face and staring, agonised eyes spoke to his desperate condition. . . . What was to be done? . . . The obstruction in the throat must be removed somehow. . . . She rose up and went into the empty room upon her left hand, and felt in the darkness for the bell. There was none. The bell-rope had been pulled down by the hand of the Minister, for this was the torture-chamber, where M. Thiers underwent his periodical ordeal of thumbscrew and rack.

Air. . . . He must have fresh air. . . . She desperately flung both the windows open, admitting a gush of piercing cold. He still groaned, but more faintly. The man was dying. Was not this the Judgment of Heaven?

In the hour of his triumph the sword had fallen. France would be saved—there would be no bombardment of Paris if the enemy were to die to-night. This she told herself, standing in the sharp draught from the open windows, and knew a thrill of intolerable triumph, thinking:

"Our Lord has delivered him into hands as weak as mine!"

Ting ! . . .

Her heart leaped and stood still. She looked breathlessly from the window. Along the middle of the snowy Rue de Provence, where pedestrians must walk to avoid the dangers of the frozen side-ways, a lantern moved, carried by a squat, muffled shape. A taller figure followed, moving steadily.

Ting-ting-ting ! . . .

A shock and thrill of mingled awe and terror passed through her. To some dying Catholic, saint or sinner, in the dawn of this day of the Christ-birth, the Body of the Virgin-born was being conveyed. . . . Was it not to aid a soul in dire temptation—two souls, it might be—that He had bidden His minister pass this way !

She bent the knee and made the Sign of the Cross trembling, then rose and sped back to the suffocating man. With a strength that she could not have believed herself possessed of, she raised his discoloured head upon her lap. . . . His great jaws were wide open. She thrust the tiny hand within them. Shuddering, sickening, she probed with her slender fingers, thrusting them down into the contracting, gulping throat.

Something bright projected beneath the swollen uvula, wedged firmly into the membrane, blocking the orifice of the trachea. She nipped the projecting end in the little fingers and pulled. It yielded. He gave a gulp of relief. As the big teeth snapped together she plucked the little hand from peril, bringing with it the broken silver pin.

LXXVIII.

He was instantly, tremendously sick, as an over-eaten ogre might have been in an Eastern story. When he had finished vomiting he heaved up his huge, shuddering bulk.

She put her slight shoulder under the groping hand, and guided him. With this slight aid he reached his room. The couch stood drawn forward at an angle towards the fireplace. He staggered to it, let himself drop upon it, and said, in a groan. . . .

"Drink ! . . ."

He pointed to the night-stand at his bedside. When she poured from the jug that stood there into the glass and brought it to him, he gulped the contents greedily.

"Barley-water . . . good for the throat !" he gasped, giving the glass back. She filled it again, and again he emptied it.

His sweat-dabbled face was regaining a more natural colour. She went to the washstand, filled a small shaving basin with cold water from the hand-jug, and brought it with a fine clean towel to his side. She dipped the towel in the water and laved his face and forehead. That he experienced relief and refreshment from this, she saw by the placid air with which he submitted, leaning his head back against the pillowed sofa-end, and closing his eyes.

She dried his face, and suddenly the great eyes opened. The voice of the Chancellor said:

"There ! . . . That will do !"

From the passive victim he had suddenly reverted to the master; potent—authoritative. . . .

"Go to bed, Mademoiselle de Bayard, and sleep," he told her. "I am comfortable . . . I shall do well enough !"

She replaced the basin and towel in silence, bent her head to the figure sitting upright on the sofa, and moved noiselessly to the door. As she touched the broken handle he said to her abruptly:

"You will be silent upon the subject of to-night's—misadventure ? . . ."

She answered:

"I will be silent, Monseigneur !"

He said, lifting a finger to detain her yet another instant:

"Do not err in supposing me ungrateful. I know very well that you have saved my life!"

A shudder passed through her slight figure. She averted her eyes, remembering.... He finished:

"I lunch with the King at the Prefecture to-morrow. I will see you before I leave the house."

"As you will, Monseigneur!"

He added with something like a twinkle:

"With regard to all that ... *débris* upon the landing ... it will not be the first time Niederstedt has been guilty in that way. Good-night, Mademoiselle, or rather, good-morning.... Hark! Was not that the bell of the house-door?"

"I—am not sure, Monseigneur!" she said in hesitation, for so ragged and weakly a peal had been evolved by the ringer, that the sound might have passed unnoticed by ears less keen than his:

"They are all asleep or drunk below-stairs!" He began to raise himself stiffly from the sofa. "I will go down...."

"No; I will go!" she said.

And she left the room. He let himself sink back on the sofa. "*Grosser Gott!*" he said to himself. "How near a thing! ... And that the little Fury should have stopped the brand from quenching! ... Well, now, at this rate, I may live another thirty years. Not that I should find much zest in a prolonged spell of power and authority. The King-Emperor, in the ordinary course, must die before long. My master in that event would be a good-natured booby, who in assuming the supreme dignities of Imperial authority, would value the stage-setting beyond anything else!"

He quoted with acerbity increased by recent suffering:

"'Pomp and solemnity' ... 'The ancient Crown of Charlemagne from Vienna' ... 'I shall write to my wife

to-night' . . . Pray do! . . . And while Your Royal Highness is about it, you had better consult little Prince William, who would probably give you as valuable advice."

His thoughts reverted to the fair-haired, puny-limbed eleven-year-old urchin in kilt and plaid of Royal Stuart tartans. . . . "Now," said he, "what sort of a future Emperor may be enclosed in that husk? . . . That the boy has a crippled left arm and a capital set of sharp teeth, which he uses on the calves of his Military Governor and tutors, is practically all I know of him. . . . Come in!"

He had been so lost in thought as to miss the sound of chains undone and bolts drawn back, though he had shivered unconsciously as the opening of the hall-door had admitted a volume of fresh, piercing air to the heated house. Now he reared himself upright upon the sofa, stared for a moment at the figure that responded to his gruff "Come in!" and burst into an irresistible laugh.

"Quite right, Mr. Breagh!" he said in his clear and fluent English, "I told you to come up to me at whatever hour you might get back. But I forgot that you would naturally visit Madame de Bayard in the costume proper to Jean Jacques Potier, to whom I suppose that extraordinary overcoat and the wolfskin cap must have belonged. Frankly I did not recognise you. . . . The condition of your clothes, and that bandage on your forehead are responsible, more than my lapse of memory. You certainly look rather shaken. Let me hope you have sustained no serious hurt?"

P. C. Breagh grinned mirthlessly, and looked ruefully down at his snowy boots and trousers, from which the melting snow was beginning to drip in little rills upon the carpeted floor. By the light of the two gas-lamps suspended above the table, it could be seen that the gory bandage surmounting his pale face had been applied by an experienced hand. He needed no immediate surgical

aid. But his blue lips and drawn and pallid features betrayed him exhausted. The Minister, noting this, pointed to a chair.

"Sit down," he said, "and rest before you speak! There is brandy in that flask that stands upon the bureau. . . . But something hot would be better for you—that is what you most need."

There was a sound upon the landing . . . a faint tap upon the door-panel.

"See who it is!" said the Chancellor.

As Breagh rose the door opened, wide enough to admit a little tray bearing two steaming coffee-cups.

"Capital!" said His Excellency, addressing the unseen cup-bearer. "Now, that I call an excellent thought!"

He took a cup from the tray Breagh offered, bidding him:

"Sit down and drink the other. I should have got none except for you!" When the steaming cup was empty: "Proceed," he said, ignoring the gray daylight outlining the curtain-poles and filtering between the drawn curtains:

"At what hour did you get to Maisons Laffitte? For I presume you did get there?"

P. C. Breagh said:

"I got there at about two o'clock. . . . I had an appointment at the Cathedral, otherwise I should have started before."

"I hope she was pretty!" said the Minister, smiling.

P. C. Breagh went on as though he had not heard:

"The snow was beginning to freeze. It was not such bad walking, but that hill of St. Germain was a winder, and in the Forest I lost my way. . . . If a party of men—peasants in sheepskin caps and jackets—forest-keepers possibly—had not turned out of an avenue and kept marching ahead I might never have got as far as the Seine road. . . ."

"The men were marching, and not walking," commented the Minister, and his great brows scowled, and his bulldog jowl hardened as he added: "And they carried guns, or you would not have taken them for keepers. . . . I have no doubt that they were *Francs-tireurs.*"

"I lost them where the road winds by the Seine," P. C. Breagh continued. "And then I had a real stroke of luck. I came across a hack-cab from Versailles at a regular stand-still. The snow had balled in the wretched horse's feet, and the driver was as drunk as David's sow. The fare was asleep inside, but he woke as I opened the cab-door and flashed one of the lamps in his face, and then he said"—the narrator unconsciously gave the tone and accent of the Doctor—"'By the piper that played before Moses, my boyo! I was dreaming of you, and here you are!'"

The Minister broke in:

"That man was the English correspondent of *The Times* newspaper. He is of the same surname, though no relative of Odo Russell, the English Envoy, who has been sent out here upon a Mission to our German Court. . . . Ill-natured diplomatists whisper that Great Britain is jealous of the great successes of Prussia, and does not welcome the prospect of a United Imperial Germany. *Au fond,* we Germans have a kind of sentimental regard for your nation. She is an offshoot of the great Germanic stem—it is impossible that we should not regard her as nearer to us than others. . . . Though, should we ever seriously quarrel, it may be found that the bitterest variance may exist between those of the same blood. . . . And so you have never confided to your friend the secret of your presence in Versailles! Reticence in the young is an unusual gift. Possibly he gave you a lift in his vehicle?"

"—Till the unlucky Rosinante gave out," acquiesced Breagh, "and we had to leave her with her Jehu at the wreck of the railway station, and then the Doctor stopped

at the diggings of the friends he was on the way to look up, a half-squadron of Barnekow's Hussars who are quartered in a deserted château. They gave me some sandwiches and beer, and then I went on by myself to the Villa Laon, where Madame de Bayard "—he stopped and added in a low voice—" used to live."

Something in the tone attracted the attention of the Chancellor. He repeated:

" Used to. . . . Does she not, then, live there now ? Has she gone with M. de Straz—the pair of love-birds flown together ? . . . "

Said P. C. Breagh, seized with a shudder that knocked his knees together, and speaking in a low voice:

" I—I beg of Your Excellency to spare her your irony. Madame de Bayard is dead !"

" So ! . . ."

The Minister's ejaculation was followed by the order:

" Now the details ! . . . Has she died naturally, or by accident—or by a murderer's hand ?"

P. C. Breagh said, lowering his voice apprehensively:

" She was killed by a shell. There was a bombardment from Mont Valérien. . . . It broke out at about a quarter past two this morning—just as I reached the Villa Laon. . . ."

" Ah ! now I understand how you got that love-token on your forehead," said the Minister.

Breagh nodded, and wiped his wet forehead with a blood-stained handkerchief, and shuddered and went on:

" Nobody had gone to bed when I got to the villa. The blinds of what I could see was a dining-room were up, and the curtains all drawn back. . . . The room was brilliantly lighted, lots of mirrors and crystal girandoles. It was like a scene on the stage, looking at it from the snowy garden. Shin deep in snow, because the paths had not been cleared. . . . You could not tell where the paths were, in

fact, so I steered my course by the big shining window. Then I saw him, moving before me——"

Queried His Excellency:

"By him, you mean whom ? . . ."

"A man," said P. C. Breagh, "who I saw moving along before me, taking cover behind snowy bushes and clumps of frosted prairie-grass. When he stood up, I saw that he was short in figure, and had immensely broad shoulders. I was quite sure that I had seen the fellow before. In fact——"

"In fact," the Minister sharply interrupted, "you recognised him as the man who posed as M. Charles Tessier, and who can have been nobody but M. Straz. Now tell me, whom was he watching ? Madame and a companion, I venture to guess ?" He added, as P. C. Breagh assented: "What was the man ? A civilian, or an officer ?"

P. C. Breagh answered, repressing another shudder:

"A tall, fair officer of the Prussian Guard Infantry. He and Madame were at supper, or they had just finished. He had opened a fresh bottle of champagne and was leaning over to fill Madame's glass when I noticed the short man standing still, watching them closely. He seemed to have his right hand in his pocket. He drew it out and then—I don't know very well what happened. There was the heavy boom of a big gun, and a shell came shrieking overhead like an express-train. . . . I remember how the spitting flare of the fuse lit up the sky. And there was a terrific crash—and something hit me on the head—a bit of masonry it must have been—for when I came to myself, other shells were hurtling, and hitting, and bursting. . . . One smashed the stables of the château where the Hussars are quartered, and another has dug a crater, they tell me, in the side of the Terrace of St. Germain. The flashes made everything show up clear like lightning, and I picked myself up. . . . The blood was running down

into my eyes, blinding me. But I'm not likely to forget what I saw. It was so awfully stagey . . . so like a picture of the sensational, blood-curdling, highly-coloured kind!"

"Go on!"

"It was like this. The upper storey of the Villa had been shaved off—simply. There was the interior of the dining-room before me, all colour and mirrors, and gilding, and twinkling wax candles in crystal girandoles. The French windows had been shattered, and there was a great hole in the ceiling. On the mantelshelf, just in front of me, between two Sèvres candlesticks was a clock, the hands pointing to half-past two. There were Sèvres figures on each side of the clock—I have seen them here in the shop-windows,—'*Pierrot qui rit*' and '*Pierrot qui pleure.*' The crying Pierrot had been smashed by the shell-splinter that shivered the mantel-mirror, but the laughing Pierrot was untouched. He seemed to be holding his sides and screaming at Valverden sprawling across the table with his skull shattered, and Madame de Bayard sitting stone-dead in her chair. She had the cigarette in her fingers, still alight. . . . It must have been painless. . . . There was only a small blue hole in her temple—just here! . . ."

The Minister was repeating:

"Valverden. . . . Are you clear that you mean Count Max Valverden! . . . But of course you are! There is no other officer of that name in the Prussian Guard Infantry. How you came to be acquainted you shall tell me to-morrow." He laughed harshly, looking at the clock upon the mantel. "I should say to-day, at a somewhat later hour!" He added, as Breagh rose: "Have you told anything of this matter to Mademoiselle de Bayard? Then, I advise you, do not enlighten her at all. Or if you must do so, tell her after you are married!"

He drove the sentence home with another that left the listener gasping.

"For of course you will marry, you and she are capitally suited to one another. The mother exists no longer, and M. Straz, if he escaped, which is most likely, will not be able to interfere. Let me recommend you now to get some rest. You will require it. For at twelve you leave Versailles with Mademoiselle de Bayard *en route* for England. Now go! . . ."

LXXIX.

P. C. Breagh and Juliette met upon the morrow, in the same spot near the rose-tree that had borne pink blossoms undismayed through the bitter wintry months.

"You have bestowed upon me no Christmas present, Monsieur," Juliette said to him gravely. "Now I will have you gather one of those roses, and give it to me! . . ."

He strode into the drift, mid-leg deep, and cut a bud that was upon the sheltered side next the wall.

"Be careful of the thorns lest they prick you!" Juliette cried to him. "Do not cut your fingers! Do not get wet!"

"You shall not have this rose," he said, withholding the frozen flower, "until you have given my Christmas gift to me!"

Her blue eyes rose brimming to meet his.

"Ah, what is there I can give you? Tell me, my friend!" she said, softly.

He got out, blushing, and swallowing a lump that rose in his throat:

"We have been through so much . . . we have seen strange and terrible things together! . . . We have shared dangers . . . we have seen a great nation in the death-throes. . . . Nothing could ever make us strangers whatever came to pass. . . . But now we are going back

to England. Before we leave this garden where we have been so happy——"

"It is true. . . . We have been happy here!" she answered.

Winged smiles were hovering about her mouth. Jewelled gleams played between the black fringes of her eyelashes, as though fairy kingfishers were diving for some new joy in those sapphire depths. She asked demurely, as the clumsy male creature choked and boggled:

"What do you seek, Monsieur? Some souvenir. . . . Some token of friendship?"

He said in a low, dogged voice:

"I have never asked mere friendship from you. But if you—if you——" He got it out with a desperate effort: "Before we leave this . . . if you would kiss me—once! . . ."

She drew back. A terrible dignity vested her sloping shoulders. Modesty veiled her eyes. He was going miserably away, when she beckoned to him, with that splendid sweep of the arm that might have belonged to Krimhilde-Brünhilde-Isolde-Britomart and the whole covey of Romance Ideals. . . . He returned. . . . She spoke, and her eyes were wavering under the eager fire of his:

"See you well, Monsieur, a young lady cannot bestow a gift of that kind. It is for the gentleman, having obtained consent, to take . . ."

Breagh caught her to his broad breast and snatched the coveted guerdon. He cried to her in wonder and triumph:

"You love me! . . . A fellow like me? . . . And you will be my wife? We are not going to England to be parted! I am not a beggar any more! I will try again for my practising degree in Medicine, and get it! I will write books and make a name for myself in Literature.

But not unless you'll marry me! . . . Oh, Juliette! say when you will marry me?"

She said, with downcast eyelids that veiled laughter, though the rose-flush had dyed her very temples, and the beating of her heart shook her slight frame:

"Monsieur, my grandmother would have answered: '*Under the circumstances the marriage cannot take place too soon. . . . Once a young girl has been kissed, she must be married.*' And"—the smile peeped out—"I was taught always to obey my grandmother! . . ."

"Admirably spoken!" said the Chancellor.

He had come upon the lovers, of set purpose it may have been. Now he stood surveying them in an ogreish, yet not unamiable fashion, as they stood before him hand in hand.

He said, and the resonant tones were veiled by a painful hoarseness, of which the reason was known to Mademoiselle alone:

"Mr. Breagh, Count Hatzfeldt has the necessary papers of which I spoke to you. You will find him in the drawing-room waiting to complete some slight formalities inseparable from the granting of passports in time of War. . . . Good-bye to you, good luck and all happiness! I am on the point of departure for the Prefecture, so I shall not again see you. For a moment I detain Mademoiselle!"

As Breagh bowed to Juliette and His Excellency and hastened toward the house, the Chancellor said to Juliette:

"It is too cold to stand here . . . it will be wiser to walk a little. There is a path that leads us out near the bottom of the shrubbery."

It was where the mask of the Satyr, now with long icicles hanging from his eyebrows and goat-beard, jutted from the ivy of the boundary-wall.

The little spring had not frozen, the ferns and grasses round its margin were still quite green. A few pinched violets peeped from amongst their broad leaves. Juliette

stooped and gathered one or two of the faintly-fragrant blossoms and a leaf of fern and a sprig of ivy. As she slipped them into the inner pocket of her jacket, the Chancellor spoke:

"Mademoiselle, I have to thank you for my life. . . . Now, last night——" He squarely confronted her, his powerful eyes looking down upon the little figure so frail and slender; "Now, last night," he repeated, "had you really believed that my death meant the salvation of your country. . . . Well! . . . Did you not hold me in the hollow of your hand?"

She met his stern regard with a look that was clear as crystal. She said in her silver tones:

"It is true, Monseigneur! Our Lord granted me my wish. You so great, so strong, so powerful, were helpless as an infant. . . . I had only not to put out my finger—and you were a dead man! The power of Life and Death was mine, yet I could not let you perish, for Almighty God would not permit it. . . . He willed that you should not die. . . . Crush France or spare her, you will not be carrying out the wishes of Count Bismarck. You will do what God permits you to do—no more and no less! But when you are most strong and most powerful . . . when you play with Kings and Emperors like pawns—then I ask you to remember Juliette Bayard!"

She quivered in every limb, but she went on resolutely:

"You are not a good man, Monseigneur! . . . Hard, subtle, arrogant, cruel and unscrupulous, God made you to be the Fate of France. One day she will lift up her face from the mire into which you have trodden it, and the star will be burning unquenched upon her forehead. We may both be dead before that day dawns. But rest assured that when next your armies cross the Rhine they will not gain an easy victory! . . . We shall be prepared and ready, Monseigneur, when the Germans come again!"

He looked at her and listened to her in silence, perhaps in wonder. She seemed the Spirit of France incarnate, a pale reed shaken by prophetic winds from Heaven.

"It may be so," he said to her gravely. "And now, Mademoiselle de Bayard, I shall ask you to give me your hand at parting!"

"Take it, Monseigneur!" she bade him.

He held it in his an instant, saying in his clear-cut French:

"I desire no evil to France when I say that I wish that every Frenchman had a daughter like you! . . ." He added: "Thanks for the *beignets*. . . . I shall always remember you when I am served with them. . . . And for last night again thank you! . . . Farewell and all happiness attend you, Mademoiselle!"

His heavy footsteps crunched the snow. He was gone, and she had almost called after him:

"Monseigneur, I do not hate you so much as I have said. . . ."

On the morning of the 27th of January eighteen French guns on Fort Montrouge had been keeping up a brisk cannonade of the German investing-works. Meeting no response their thunder ceased. Then. upon the east and north of beleaguered Paris—with a simultaneous uprush of fierce white flame from the muzzles of seventy giant howitzers, with the detonation of driving-charges, and the piercing screams and deafening crashes attendant on the transit and percussion of Krupp's huge siege-projectiles, the bombardment of the doomed Queen City of Cities had begun. . . .

A few moments before, as Juliette de Bayard and her lover landed upon the steamer-pier at Dover, an aged French lady, who had stopped Count Bismarck on the steps of the Prefecture of Versailles, had imploringly said to him:

"*O ! Monseigneur, donnez nous la paix !*"

And the Iron Chancellor had replied to her almost smilingly:

"Dear lady, it is with a peace as with a marriage, there must be two parties willing to conclude the contract. . . . Now, I am ready to make peace, but the other side is not !"

THE END

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